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The life and letters of
Walter H. Page

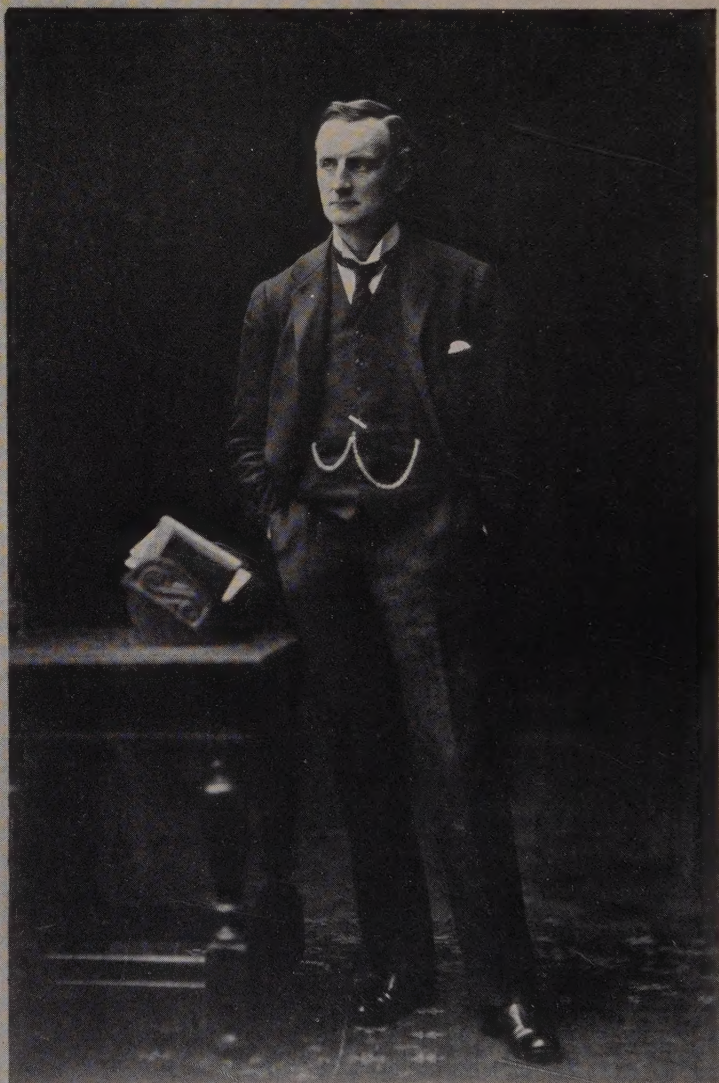
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THE
LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
WALTER H. PAGE



Edward Grey.

Sir Edward Grey (now Viscount Grey of Fallodon), Secretary of
State for Foreign Affairs, 1905-1916

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF WALTER H. PAGE

BY
BURTON J. HENDRICK



VOLUME I

PART II

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THE
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WALTER H. PAGE

CHAPTER VII

PERSONALITIES OF THE MEXICAN PROBLEM

PAGE'S remarks about the "trouble in Mexico City" and the "remaining task" refer, of course, to Sir Lionel Carden. "As I make Carden out," he wrote about this time, "he's a slow-minded, unimaginative, commercial Briton, with as much nimbleness as an elephant. British commerce is his deity, British advantage his duty and mission; and he goes about his work with blunt dullness and ineptitude. That's his mental calibre as I read him—a dull, commercial man."

Although Sir Lionel Carden had been compelled to harmonize himself with the American policy, Page regarded his continued presence in Mexico City as a standing menace to British-American relations. He therefore set himself to accomplish the minister's removal. The failure of President Taft's attempt to obtain Carden's transfer from Havana, in 1912, showed that Page's new enterprise was a delicate and difficult one; yet he did not hesitate.

The part that the wives of diplomats and statesmen play in international relations is one that few Americans understand. Yet in London, the Ambassador's wife is almost as important a person as the Ambassador himself. An event which now took place in the American Embassy emphasized this point. A certain lady, well known in London, called upon Mrs. Page and gave her a message on Mexican affairs for the Ambassador's

benefit. The purport was that the activities of certain British commercial interests in Mexico, if not checked, would produce a serious situation between Great Britain and the United States. The lady in question was herself a sincere worker for Anglo-American amity, and this was the motive that led her to take an unusual step.

"It's all being done for the benefit of one man," she said.

The facts were presented in the form of a memorandum, which Mrs. Page copied and gave the Ambassador. This, in turn, Page sent to President Wilson.

To Edward M. House

London, November 26, 1913.

DEAR HOUSE:

Won't you read the enclosed and get it to the President? It is somewhat extra-official but it is very confidential, and I have a special reason for wishing it to go through your hands. Perhaps it will interest you.

The lady that wrote it is one of the very best-informed women I know, one of those active and most influential women in the high political society of this Kingdom, at whose table statesmen and diplomats meet and important things come to pass. . . .

I am sure she has no motive but the avowed one. She has taken a liking to Mrs. Page and this is merely a friendly and patriotic act.

I had heard most of the things before as gossip—never before as here put together by a responsible hand.

Mrs. Page went to see her and, as evidence of our appreciation and safety, gave the original back to her. We have kept no copy, and I wish this burned, if you please. It would raise a riot here, if any breath of it were to get out, that would put bedlam to shame.

Lord Cowdray has been to see me for four successive days. I have a suspicion (though I don't know) that, instead of his running the Government, the Government has now turned the tables and is running him. His government contract is becoming a bad thing to sleep with. He told me this morning that he (through Lord Murray) had withdrawn the request for any concession in Colombia.¹ I congratulated him. "That, Lord Cowdray, will save you as well as some other people I know a good deal of possible trouble." I have explained to him the whole New Principle *in extenso*, "so that you may see clearly where the line of danger runs." Lord! how he's changed! Several weeks ago when I ran across him accidentally he was humorous, almost cynical. Now he's very serious. I explained to him that the only thing that had kept South America from being parcelled out as Africa has been is the Monroe Doctrine and the United States behind it. He granted that.

"In Monroe's time," said I, "the only way to take a part of South America was to take land. Now finance has new ways of its own!"

"Perhaps," said he.

"Right there," I answered, "where you put your 'perhaps,' I put a danger signal. That, I assure you, you will read about in the histories as 'The Wilson Doctrine'!"

You don't know how easy it all is with our friend and leader in command. I've almost grown bold. You feel steady ground beneath you. They are taking to their tents.

"What's going to happen in Mexico City?"

¹This was another manifestation of British friendliness. When the American excitement was most acute, it became known that British capitalists had secured oil concessions in Colombia. At the demand of the British Government they gave them up.

"A peaceful tragedy, followed by emancipation."

"And the great industries of Mexico?"

"They will not have to depend on adventurers' favours!"

"But in the meantime, what?"

"Patience, looking towards justice!"

Yours heartily and in health (you bet!)

W. H. P.

From Edward M. House

145 East 35th Street,
New York City.

December 12, 1913.

DEAR PAGE:

Your budget under dates, November 15th, 23rd, and 26th came to me last week, just after the President had been here. I saved the letters until I went to Washington, from which place I have just returned.

The President has been in bed for nearly a week and Doctor Grayson permitted no one to see him but me. Yesterday before I left he was feeling so well that I asked him if he did not want to feel better and then I read him your letters. Mrs. Wilson was present.

I cannot tell you how pleased he was. He laughed repeatedly at the different comments you made and he was delighted with what you had to say concerning Lord Cowdray. We do not love him for we think that between Cowdray and Carden a large part of our troubles in Mexico has been made. Your description of his attitude at the beginning and his present one pleased us much.

After I had read the confidential letter the President said "now let me see if I have the facts." He then recited them in consecutive order just as the English lady had written them, almost using the same phrases, showing

the well-trained mind that he has. I then dropped the letter in the grate.

He enjoyed heartily the expression "Washington is a deep hole of silence towards ambassadors," and again "The volume of silence that I get is oppressive," and of course the story apropos of this last remark.

I was with him for more than an hour and he was distinctly better when I left. I hated to look at him in bed for I could not help realizing what his life means to the Democratic Party, to the Nation and almost to the world.

Of course you know that I only read your letters to him. Mr. Bryan was my guest on Wednesday and I returned to Washington with him but I made no mention of our correspondence and I never have. The President seems to like our way of doing things and further than that I do not care.

Upon my soul I do not believe the President could be better pleased than he is with the work you are doing.

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

From now on the Ambassador exerted a round-about pressure—the method of "gradual approach" already referred to—upon the Foreign Office for Carden's removal. An extract from a letter to the President gives a hint concerning this method:

I have already worked upon Sir Edward's mind about his Minister to Mexico as far as I could. Now that the other matter is settled and while Carden is behaving, I go at it. Two years ago Mr. Knox made a bad blunder in protesting against Carden's "anti-Americanism" in Cuba. Mr. Knox sent Mr. Reid no definite facts nor even

accusations to base a protest on. The result was a failure—a bad failure. I have again asked Mr. Bryan for all the definite reports he has heard about Carden. That man, in my judgment, has caused nine tenths of the trouble here.

Naturally Page did not ask the Minister's removal directly—that would have been an unpardonable blunder. His meetings during this period with Sir Edward were taking place almost every day, and Carden, in one way or another, kept coming to the front in their conversation. Sir Edward, like Page, would sacrifice much in the cause of Anglo-American relations; Page would occasionally express his regret that the British Minister to Mexico was not a man who shared their enthusiasm on this subject; in numerous other ways the impression was conveyed that the two countries could solve the Mexican entanglement much better if a more congenial person represented British interests in the Southern Republic. This reasoning evidently produced the desired results. In early January, 1914, a hint was unofficially conveyed to the American Ambassador that Carden was to be summoned to London for a "conversation" with Sir Edward Grey, and that his return to Mexico would depend upon the outcome of that interview. There was a likelihood that, in future, Sir Lionel Carden would represent the British Empire in Brazil.

This news, sent in discreet cipher to Washington, delighted the Administration. "It is fine about Carden," wrote Colonel House on January 10th. "I knew you had done it when I saw it in the papers, but I did not know just how. You could not have brought it about in a more diplomatic and effectual way."

And the following came from the President:

From President Wilson

Pass Christian,
January 6, 1914.

MY DEAR PAGE:

I have your letter of December twenty-first, which I have greatly enjoyed.

Almost at the very time I was reading it, the report came through the Associated Press from London that Carden was to be transferred immediately to Brazil. If this is true, it is indeed a most fortunate thing and I feel sure it is to be ascribed to your tactful and yet very plain representations to Sir Edward Grey. I do not think you realize how hard we worked to get from either Lind or O'Shaughnessy¹ definite items of speech or conduct which we could furnish you as material for what you had to say to the Ministers about Carden. It simply was not obtainable. Everything that we got was at second or third hand. That he was working against us was too plain for denial, and yet he seems to have done it in a very astute way which nobody could take direct hold of. I congratulate you with all my heart on his transference.

I long, as you do, for an opportunity to do constructive work all along the line in our foreign relations, particularly with Great Britain and the Latin-American states, but surely, my dear fellow, you are deceiving yourself in supposing that constructive work is not now actually going on, and going on at your hands quite as much as at ours. The change of attitude and the growing ability to understand what we are thinking about and purposing on the part of the official circle in London is directly attributable

¹Mr. Nelson O'Shaughnessy, Chargé d'Affaires in Mexico.

to what you have been doing, and I feel more and more grateful every day that you are our spokesman and interpreter there. This is the only possible constructive work in foreign affairs, aside from definite acts of policy.

So far as the policy is concerned, you may be sure I will strive to the utmost to obtain both a repeal of the discrimination in the matter of tolls and a renewal of the arbitration treaties, and I am not without hope that I can accomplish both at this session. Indeed this is the session in which these things must be done if they are to be done at all.

Back of the smile which came to my face when you spoke of the impenetrable silence of the State Department toward its foreign representatives lay thoughts of very serious concern. We must certainly manage to keep our foreign representatives properly informed. The real trouble is to conduct genuinely confidential correspondence except through private letters, but surely the thing can be changed and it will be if I can manage it.

We are deeply indebted to you for your kindness and generous hospitality to our young folks¹ and we have learned with delight through your letters and theirs of their happy days in England.

With deep regard and appreciation,

Cordially and faithfully yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

HON. WALTER H. PAGE,

American Embassy,

London, England.

Yet for the American Ambassador the experience was not one of unmixed satisfaction. These letters have contained references to the demoralized condition of the

¹Mr. and Mrs. Francis B. Sayre.

State Department under Mr. Bryan and the succeeding ones will contain more; the Carden episode portrayed the stupidity and ignorance of that Department at their worst. By commanding Carden to cease his anti-American tactics and to support the American policy the Foreign Office had performed an act of the utmost courtesy and consideration to this country. By quietly "promoting" the same minister to another sphere, several thousand miles away from Mexico and Washington, it was now preparing to eliminate all possible causes of friction between the two countries. The British, that is, had met the wishes of the United States in the two great matters that were then making serious trouble—Huerta and Carden. Yet no government, Great Britain least of all, wishes to be placed in the position of moving its diplomats about at the request of another Power. The whole deplorable story appears in the following letter.

To Edward M. House

January 8th, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

Two days ago I sent a telegram to the Department saying that I had information from a private, *unofficial* source that the report that Carden would be transferred was true, and from another source that Marling would succeed him. The Government here has given out nothing. I know nothing from official sources. Of course the only decent thing to do at Washington was to sit still till this Government should see fit to make an announcement. But what do they do? Give my telegram to the press! It appears here almost verbatim in this morning's *Mail*.—I have to make an humiliating explanation to the Foreign Office. This is the third

time I've had to make such an humiliating explanation to Sir Edward. It's getting a little monotonous. He's getting tired, and so am I. They now deny at the Foreign Office that anything has been decided about Carden, and this meddling by us (as they look at it) will surely cause a delay and may even cause a change of purpose.

That's the practical result of their leaking at Washington. On a previous occasion they leaked the same way. When I telegraphed a remonstrance, they telegraphed back to me that the leak had been *here!* That was the end of it—except that I had to explain to Sir Edward the best I could. And about a lesser matter, I did the same thing a third time, in a conversation. Three times this sort of thing has happened.—On the other hand, the King's Master of Ceremonies called on me on the President's Birthday and requested for His Majesty that I send His Majesty's congratulations. Just ten days passed before a telegraphic answer came! The very hour it came, I was myself making up an answer for the President that I was going to send, to save our face.

Now, I'm trying with all my might to do this job. I spend all my time, all my ingenuity, all my money at it. I have organized my staff as a sort of Cabinet. We meet every day. We go over everything conceivable that we may do or try to do. We do good team work. I am not sure but I doubt whether these secretaries have before been taken into just such a relation to their chief. They are enthusiastic and ambitious and industrious and—*safe*. There's no possibility of any leak. We arrange our dinners with reference to the possibility of getting information and of carrying points. Mrs. Page gives and accepts invitations with the same end in view. We're on the job to the very limit of our abilities.

And I've got the Foreign Office in such a relation that

they are frank and friendly. (I can't keep 'em so, if this sort of thing goes on.)

Now the State Department seems (as it touches us) to be utterly chaotic—silent when it ought to respond, loquacious when it ought to be silent. There are questions that I have put to it at this Government's request to which I can get no answer.

It's hard to keep my staff enthusiastic under these conditions. When I reached the Chancery this morning, they were in my room, with all the morning papers marked, on the table, eagerly discussing what we ought to do about this publication of my dispatch. The enthusiasm and buoyancy were all gone out of them. By their looks they said, "Oh! what's the use of our bestirring ourselves to send news to Washington when they use it to embarrass us?"—While we are thus at work, the only two communications from the Department to-day are two letters from two of the Secretaries about—presenting "Democratic" ladies from Texas and Oklahoma at court! And Bryan is now lecturing in Kansas.

Since I began to write this letter, Lord Cowdray came here to the house and stayed two and a half hours, talking about possible joint intervention in Mexico. Possibly he came from the Foreign Office. I don't know whether to dare send a despatch to the State Department, telling what he told me, for fear they'd leak. And to leak this—Good Lord! Two of the Secretaries were here to dinner, and I asked them if I should send such a despatch. They both answered instantly: "No, sir, don't dare: *write* it to the President." I said: "No, I have no right to bother the President with regular business nor with frequent letters." To that they agreed; but the interesting and somewhat appalling thing is, they're actually afraid to have a confidential despatch go to the State Department.

I see nothing to do but to suggest to the President to put somebody in the Department who will stay there and give intelligent attention to the diplomatic telegrams and letters—some conscientious assistant or clerk. For I hear mutterings, somewhat like these mutterings of mine, from some of the continental embassies.—The whole thing is disorganizing and demoralizing beyond description.

All these and more are *my* troubles. I'll take care of them. But remember what I am going to write on the next sheet. For here may come a trouble for *you*:

Mrs. Page has learned something more about Secretary Bryan's proposed visit here in the spring. He's coming to talk his peace plan which, you know, is a sort of grape-juice arbitration—a distinct step backward from a real arbitration treaty. Well, if he comes with *that*, when you come to talk about reducing armaments, you'll wish you'd never been born. Get your ingenuity together, then, and prevent that visit.¹

Not the least funny thing in the world is—Senator X turned up to-day. As he danced around the room begging everybody's pardon (nobody knew what for) he complimented everybody in sight, explained the forged letter, dilated on state politics, set the Irish question on the right end, cleared Bacon² of all hostility to me, declined tea because he had insomnia and explained just how it works to keep you awake, danced more and declared himself happy and bowed himself out—well pleased. He's as funny a cuss as I've seen in many a day. Lord Cowdray, who was telling Mexican woes to Katharine in the corner, looked up and asked, "Who's the little

¹Colonel House succeeded in preventing it.

²Senator Augustus O. Bacon, of Georgia who was reported to nourish ill-feeling toward Page for his authorship of "The Southerner."

dancing gentleman?" Suppose X had known he was dancing for—Lord Cowdray's amusement, what do y' suppose he'd 've thought? There are some strange combinations in our house on Mrs. Page's days at home. Cowdray has, I am sure, lost (that is, failed to make) a hundred million dollars that he had within easy reach by this Wilson Doctrine, but he's game. He doesn't lie awake. He's a dead-game sport, and he knows he's knocked out in that quarter and he doesn't squeal. His experiences will serve us many a good turn in the future—as a warning. I rather like him. He eats out of my hand in the afternoon and has one of his papers jump on me in the morning. Some time in the twenty-four hours, he must attain about the normal temperature—say about noon. He admires the President greatly—sincerely. Force meets force, you see. With the President behind me I could really enjoy Cowdray centuries after X had danced himself into oblivion.

By the way, Cowdray said to me to-day: "Whatever the United States and Great Britain agree on the world must do." He's right. (1) The President must come here, perhaps in his second term; (2) these two Governments must enter a compact for peace and for gradual disarmament. Then we can go about our business for (say) a hundred years.

Heartily,

W. H. P.

In spite of the continued pressure of the United States and the passive support of its anti-Huerta policy by Great Britain, the Mexican usurper refused to resign. President Wilson now began to espouse the interests of Villa and Carranza. His letters to Page indicate that he took these men at their own valuation, believed that they were sincere patriots working for the cause of

“democracy” and “constitutionalism” and that their triumph would usher in a day of enlightenment and progress for Mexico. It was the opinion of the Foreign Office that Villa and Carranza were worse men than Huerta and that any recognition of their revolutionary activities would represent no moral gain.

From the President

The White House, Washington,
May 18, 1914.

MY DEAR PAGE:

. . . As to the attitude of mind on that side of the water toward the Constitutionalists, it is based upon prejudices which cannot be sustained by the facts. I am enclosing a copy of an interview by a Mr. Reid¹ which appeared in one of the afternoon papers recently and which sums up as well as they could be summed up my own conclusions with regard to the issues and the personnel of the pending contest in Mexico. I can verify it from a hundred different sources, most of them sources not in the least touched by predilections for such men as our friends in London have supposed Carranza and Villa to be.

Cordially and faithfully yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

HON. WALTER H. PAGE,
U. S. Embassy,
London, England.

The White House, Washington,
June 1, 1914.

MY DEAR PAGE:

. . . The fundamental thing is that they (British critics of Villa) are all radically mistaken. There has

¹Probably an error for John Reed, at that time a newspaper correspondent in Mexico—afterward well known as a champion of the Bolshevik régime in Russia.

been less disorder and less danger to life where the Constitutionalists have gained control than there has been where Huerta is in control. I should think that if they are getting correct advices from Tampico, people in England would be very much enlightened by what has happened there. Before the Constitutionalists took the place there was constant danger to the oil properties and to foreign residents. Now there is no danger and the men who felt obliged to leave the oil wells to their Mexican employees are returning, to find, by the way, that their Mexican employees guarded them most faithfully without wages, and in some instances almost without food. I am told that the Constitutionalists cheered the American flag when they entered Tampico.

I believe that Mexico City will be much quieter and a much safer place to live in after the Constitutionalists get there than it is now. The men who are approaching and are sure to reach it are much less savage and much more capable of government than Huerta.

These, I need not tell you, are not fancies of mine but conclusions I have drawn from facts which are at last becoming very plain and palpable, at least to us on this side of the water. If they are not becoming plain in Great Britain, it is because their papers are not serving them with the truth. Our own papers were prejudiced enough in all conscience against Villa and Carranza and everything that was happening in the north of Mexico, but at last the light is dawning on them in spite of themselves and they are beginning to see things as they really are. I would be as nervous and impatient as your friends in London are if I feared the same things that they fear, but I do not. I am convinced that even Zapata would restrain his followers and leave, at any rate, all

foreigners and all foreign property untouched if he were the first to enter Mexico City.

Cordially and faithfully yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

HON. WALTER H. PAGE,
American Embassy,
London, England.

On this issue, however, the President and his Ambassador to Great Britain permanently disagreed. The events which took place in April, 1914—the insult to the American flag at Tampico, the bombardment and capture of Vera Cruz by American forces—made stronger Page's conviction, already set forth in this correspondence, that there was only one solution of the Mexican problem.

To Edward M. House

April 27, 1914.

DEAR HOUSE:

. . . And, as for war with Mexico—I confess I've had a continually growing fear of it for six months. I've no confidence in the Mexican leaders—none of 'em. We shall have to Cuba-ize the country, which means thrashing 'em first—I fear, I fear, I fear; and I feel sorry for us all, the President in particular. It's inexpressibly hard fortune for him. I can't tell you with what eager fear we look for despatches every day and twice a day hurry to get the newspapers. All England believes we've got to fight it out.

Well, the English are with us, you see. Admiral Cradock, I understand, does not approve our policy, but he stands firmly with us whatever we do. The word to stand firmly with us has, I am very sure, been passed along the whole line—naval, newspaper, financial, dip-

lomatic. Carden won't give us any more trouble during the rest of his stay in Mexico. The yellow press's abuse of the President and me has actually helped us here.

Heartily yours,

W. H. P.

CHAPTER VIII

HONOUR AND DISHONOUR IN PANAMA

IN THE early part of January, 1914, Colonel House wrote Page, asking whether he would consider favourably an offer to enter President Wilson's Cabinet, as Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. David F. Houston, who was then most acceptably filling that position, was also an authority on banking and finance; the plan was to make him governor of the new Federal Reserve Board, then in process of formation, and to transfer Page to the vacant place in the Cabinet. The proposal was not carried through, but Page's reply took the form of a review of his ambassadorship up to date, of his vexations, his embarrassments, his successes, and especially of the very important task which still lay before him. There were certain reasons, it will appear, why he would have liked to leave London; and there was one impelling reason why he preferred to stay. From the day of his arrival in England, Page had been humiliated, and his work had been constantly impeded, by the almost studied neglect with which Washington treated its diplomatic service. The fact that the American Government provided no official residence for its Ambassador, and no adequate financial allowance for maintaining the office, had made his position almost an intolerable one. All Page's predecessors for twenty-five years had been rich men who could advance the cost of the Embassy from their own private purses; to meet these expenses, however, Page had been obliged to encroach on the savings of a life-

time, and such liberality on his part necessarily had its limitations.

To Edward M. House

London, England,
February 13, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

. . . Of course I am open to the criticism of having taken the place at all. But I was both uninformed and misinformed about the cost as well as about the frightful handicap of having no Embassy. It's a kind of scandal in London and it has its serious effect. Everybody talks about it all the time: "Will you explain to me why it is that your great Government has no Embassy: it's very odd!" "What a frugal Government you have!" "It's a damned mean outfit, your American Government." Mrs. Page collapses many an evening when she gets to her room. "If they'd only quit talking about it!" The other Ambassadors, now that we're coming to know them fairly well, commiserate us. It's a constant humiliation. Of course this aspect of it doesn't worry me much—I've got hardened to it. But it is a good deal of a real handicap, and it adds that much dead weight that a man must overcome; and it greatly lessens the respect in which our Government and its Ambassador are held. If I had known this fully in advance, I should not have had the courage to come here. Now, of course, I've got used to it, have discounted it, and can "bull" it through—could "bull" it through if I could afford to pay the bill. But I shouldn't advise any friend of mine to come here and face this humiliation without realizing precisely what it means—wholly apart, of course, from the cost of it. . . .

My dear House, on the present basis much of the dip-

lomatic business is sheer humbug. It will always be so till we have our own Embassies and an established position in consequence. Without a home or a house or a fixed background, every man has to establish his own position for himself; and unless he be unusual, this throws him clean out of the way of giving emphasis to the right things. . . .

As for our position, I think I don't fool myself. The job at the Foreign Office is easy because there is no real trouble between us, and because Sir Edward Grey is pretty nearly an ideal man to get on with. I think he likes me, too, because, of course, I'm straightforward and frank with him, and he likes the things we stand for. Outside this official part of the job, of course, we're commonplace—a successful commonplace, I hope. But that's all. We don't know how to try to be anything but what we naturally are. I dare say we are laughed at here and there about this and that. Sometimes I hear criticisms, now and then more or less serious ones. Much of it comes of our greenness; some of it from the very nature of the situation. Those who expect to find us brilliant are, of course, disappointed. Nor are we *smart*, and the smart set (both American and English) find us uninteresting. But we drive ahead and keep a philosophical temper and simply do the best we can, and, you may be sure, a good deal of it. It *is* laborious. For instance, I've made two trips lately to speak before important bodies, one at Leeds, the other at Newcastle, at both of which, in different ways, I have tried to explain the President's principle in dealing with Central American turbulent states—and, incidentally, the American ideals of government. The audiences see it, approve it, applaud it. The newspaper editorial writers never quite go the length—it involves a denial of the divine right of

the British Empire; at least they fear so. The fewest possible Englishmen really understand our governmental aims and ideals. I have delivered unnumbered and innumerable little speeches, directly or indirectly, about them; and they seem to like them. But it would take an army of oratorical ambassadors a lifetime to get the idea into the heads of them all. In some ways they are incredibly far back in mediævalism—incredibly.

If I have to leave in the fall or in December, it will be said and thought that I've failed, unless there be some reason that can be made public. I should be perfectly willing to tell the reason—the failure of the Government to make it financially possible. I've nothing to conceal—only definite amounts. I'd never say what it has cost—only that it costs more than I or anybody but a rich man can afford. If then, or in the meantime, the President should wish me to serve elsewhere, *that* would, of course, be a sufficient reason for my going.

Now another matter, with which I shall not bother the President—he has enough to bear on that score. It was announced in one of the London papers the other day that Mr. Bryan would deliver a lecture here, and probably in each of the principal European capitals, on Peace. Now, God restrain me from saying, much more from doing, anything rash. But if I've got to go home at all, I'd rather go before he comes. It'll take years for the American Ambassadors to recover what they'll lose if he carry out this plan. They now laugh at him here. Only the President's great personality saves the situation in foreign relations. Of course the public here doesn't know how utterly unorganized the State Department is—how we can't get answers to important questions, and how they publish most secret despatches or allow them to leak out. But "bad breaks" like this occur. Mr. Z,

of the 100-years'-Peace Committee,¹ came here a week ago, with a letter from Bryan to the Prime Minister! Z told me that this 100-year business gave a chance to bind the nations together that ought not to be missed. Hence Bryan had asked him to take up the relations of the countries with the Prime Minister! Bryan sent a telegram to Z to be read at a big 100-year meeting here. As for the personal indignity to me—I overlook that. I don't think he means it. But if he doesn't mean it, what does he mean? That's what the Prime Minister asks himself. Fortunately Mr. Asquith and I get along mighty well. He met Bryan once, and he told me with a smile that he regarded him as "a peculiar product of your country." But the Secretary is always doing things like this. He dashes off letters of introduction to people asking me to present them to Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, etc.

In the United States we know Mr. Bryan. We know his good points, his good services, his good intentions. We not only tolerate him; we like him. But when he comes here as "the American Prime Minister"²—good-bye, John! All that we've tried to do to gain respect for our Government (as they respect our great nation) will disappear in one day. Of course they'll feel obliged to give him big official dinners, etc. And——

Now you'd just as well abandon your trip if he comes; and (I confess) I'd rather be gone. No member of another government ever came here and lectured. T. R. did it as a private citizen, and even then he split the heavens asunder.³ Most Englishmen will regard it as a

¹The Committee to celebrate the centennial of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812. The plan to make this an elaborate commemoration of a 100 years' peace between the English-speaking peoples was upset by the outbreak of the World War.

²This was the designation Mr. Bryan's admirers sometimes gave him.

³The reference is to President Roosevelt's speech at the Guildhall in June, 1910.

piece of effrontery. Of course, I'm not in the least concerned about mere matters of taste. It's only the bigger effects that I have in mind in *queering* our Government in their eyes. He must be kept at home on the Mexican problem, or some other.

Yours faithfully,

WALTER H. PAGE.

P. S. But, by George, it's a fine game! This Government and ours are standing together all right, especially since the President has taken hold of our foreign relations himself. With such a man at the helm at home, we can do whatever we wish to do with the English, as I've often told you. (But it raises doubts every time the shoe-string necktie, broad-brimmed black hat, oratorical, old-time, River Platte kind of note is heard.) We've come a long way in a year—a very joyful long way, full of progress and real understanding; there's no doubt about that. A year ago they knew very well the failure that had saddled them with the tolls trouble and the failure of arbitration, and an unknown President had just come in. Presently an unknown Ambassador arrived. Mexico got worse; would we not recognize Huerta? They send Carden. We had nothing to say about the tolls—simply asked for time. They were very friendly; but our slang phrase fits the situation—"nothin' doin'." They declined San Francisco.¹ Then presently they began to see some plan in Mexico; they began to see our attitude on the tolls; they began to understand our attitude toward concessions and governments run for profit; they began dimly to see that Carden was a misfit; the Tariff Bill passed; the Currency Bill; the President loomed up; even the

¹This refers to the declination of the British Government to be represented at the San Francisco world exhibition, held in 1915.

Ambassador, they said, really believed what he preached; he wasn't merely making pretty, friendly speeches.—Now, when we get this tolls job done, we've got 'em where we can do any proper and reasonable thing we want. It's been a great three quarters of a year—immense, in fact. No man has been in the White House who is so regarded since Lincoln; in fact, they didn't regard Lincoln while he lived.

Meantime, I've got to be more or less at home. The Prime Minister dines with me, the Foreign Secretary, the Archbishop, the Colonial Secretary—all the rest of 'em; the King talks very freely; Mr. Asquith tells me some of his troubles; Sir Edward is become a good personal friend; Lord Bryce warms up; the Lord Chancellor is chummy; and so it goes.

So you may be sure we are all in high feather after all; and the President's (I fear exaggerated) appreciation of what I've done is very gratifying indeed. I've got only one emotion about it all—gratitude; and gratitude begets eagerness to go on. Of course I can do future jobs better than I have done any past ones.

There are two shadows in the background—not disturbing, but shadows none the less:

1. The constant reminder that the American Ambassador's homeless position (to this Government and to this whole people) shows that the American Government and the American people know nothing about foreign relations and care nothing—regard them as not worth buying a house for. This leaves a doubt about any continuity of any American policy. It even suggests a sort of fear that we don't really care.

- The other is (2) the dispiriting experience of writing and telegraphing about important things and never hearing a word concerning many of them, and the consequent

fear of some dead bad break in the State Department. The clubs are full of stories of the silly and incredible things that are *said* to happen there.

After all, these are old troubles. They are not new—neither of them. And we are the happiest group you ever saw.

W. H. P.

Page's letters of this period contain many references to his inability to maintain touch with the State Department. His letters remained unacknowledged, his telegrams unanswered; and he was himself left completely in the dark as to the plans and opinions at Washington.

To Edward M. House

February 28, 1914.

DEAR HOUSE:

. . . *Couldn't the business with Great Britain be put into Moore's¹ hands?* It is surely important enough at times to warrant separate attention—or (I might say) attention. You know, after eight or nine months of this sort of thing, the feeling grows on us all here that perhaps many of our telegrams and letters may not be read by anybody at all. You begin to feel that they may not be deciphered or even opened. Then comes the feeling (for a moment), why send any more? Why do anything but answer such questions as come now and then? Corresponding with Nobody—can you imagine how that feels?—What the devil *do* you suppose does become of the letters and telegrams that I send, from which and about which I never hear a word? As a mere matter of curiosity I should like to know who receives them and what he does with them!

¹John Bassett Moore, at that time the very able counsellor of the State Department.

I've a great mind some day to send a despatch saying that an earthquake has swallowed up the Thames, that a suffragette has kissed the King, and that the statue of Cromwell has made an assault on the House of Lords—just to see if anybody deciphers it.

After the Civil War an old fellow in Virginia was tired of the world. He'd have no more to do with it. He cut a slit in a box in his house and nailed up the box. Whenever a letter came for him, he'd read the postmark and say "Baltimore—Baltimore—there isn't anybody in Baltimore that I care to hear from." Then he'd drop the letter unopened through the slit into the box. "Philadelphia? I have no friend in Philadelphia"—into the box, unopened. When he died, the big box was nearly full of unopened letters. When I get to Washington again, I'm going to look for a big box that must now be nearly full of my unopened letters and telegrams.

W. H. P.

The real reason why the Ambassador wished to remain in London was to assist in undoing a great wrong which the United States had done itself and the world. Page was attempting to perform his part in introducing new standards into diplomacy. His discussions of Mexico had taken the form of that "idealism" which he was apparently having some difficulty in persuading British statesmen and the British public to accept. He was doing his best to help bring about that day when, in Gladstone's famous words, "the idea of public right would be the governing idea" of international relations. But while the American Ambassador was preaching this new conception, the position of his own country on one important matter was a constant impediment to his efforts. Page was continually confronted by the fact that the

United States, high-minded as its foreign policy might pretend to be, was far from "idealistic" in the observance of the treaty that it had made with Great Britain concerning the Panama Canal. There was a certain embarrassment involved in preaching unselfishness in Mexico and Central America at a time when the United States was practising selfishness and dishonesty in Panama. For, in the opinion of the Ambassador and that of most other dispassionate students of the Panama treaty, the American policy on Panama tolls amounted to nothing less.

To one unskilled in legal technicalities, the Panama controversy involved no great difficulty. Since 1850 the United States and Great Britain had had a written understanding upon the construction of the Panama Canal. The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, which was adopted that year, provided that the two countries should share equally in the construction and control of the proposed waterway across the Isthmus. This idea of joint control had always rankled in the United States, and in 1901 the American Government persuaded Great Britain to abrogate the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and agree to another—the Hay-Pauncefote—which transferred the rights of ownership and construction exclusively to this country. In consenting to this important change, Great Britain had made only one stipulation. "The Canal," so read Article III of the Convention of 1901, "shall be free and open to the vessels of commerce and war of all nations observing these rules, on terms of entire equality, so that there shall be no discrimination against any such nation, or its citizens or subjects, in respect of the conditions or charges of traffic, or otherwise." It would seem as though the English language could utter no thought more clearly than this. The agreement said, not inferentially, but in

so many words, that the "charges" levied on the ships of "all nations" that used the Canal should be the same. The history of British-American negotiations on the subject of the Canal had always emphasized this same point. All American witnesses to drawing the Treaty have testified that this was the American understanding. The correspondence of John Hay, who was Secretary of State at the time, makes it clear that this was the agreement. Mr. Elihu Root, who, as Secretary of War, sat next to John Hay in the Cabinet which authorized the treaty, has taken the same stand. The man who conducted the preliminary negotiations with Lord Salisbury, Mr. Henry White, has emphasized the same point. Mr. Joseph H. Choate, who, as American Ambassador to Great Britain in 1901, had charge of the negotiations, has testified that the British and American Governments "meant what they said and said what they meant."

In the face of this solemn understanding, the American Congress, in 1912, passed the Panama Canal Act, which provided that "no tolls shall be levied upon vessels engaged in the coastwise trade of the United States." A technical argument, based upon the theory that "all nations" did not include the United States, and that, inasmuch as this country had obtained sovereign rights upon the Isthmus, the situation had changed, persuaded President Taft to sign this bill. Perhaps this line of reasoning satisfied the legal consciences of President Taft and Mr. Knox, his Secretary of State, but it really cut little figure in the acrimonious discussion that ensued. Of course, there was only one question involved; that was as to whether the exemption violated the Treaty. This is precisely the one point that nearly all the controversialists avoided. The statement that the United States had built the Canal with its own money and its

own genius, that it had achieved a great success where other nations had achieved a great failure, and that it had the right of passing its own ships through its own highway without assessing tolls—this was apparently argument enough. When Great Britain protested the exemption as a violation of the Treaty, there were not lacking plenty of elements in American politics and journalism to denounce her as committing an act of high-handed impertinence, as having intruded herself in matters which were not properly her concern, and as having attempted to rob the American public of the fruits of its own enterprise. That animosity to Great Britain, which is always present in certain parts of the hyphenated population, burst into full flame.

Clear as were the legal aspects of the dispute, the position of the Wilson Administration was a difficult one. The Irish-American elements, which have specialized in making trouble between the United States and Great Britain, represented a strength to the Democratic Party in most large cities. The great mass of Democratic Senators and Congressmen had voted for the exemption bill. The Democratic platform of 1912 had endorsed this same legislation. This declaration was the handiwork of Senator O’Gorman, of New York State, who had long been a leader of the anti-British crusade in American politics. More awkward still, President Wilson, in the course of his Presidential campaign, had himself spoken approvingly of free tolls for American ships. The probability is that, when the President made this unfortunate reference to this clause in the Democratic programme, he had given the matter little personal investigation; it must be held to his credit that, when the facts were clearly presented to him, his mind quickly grasped the real point at issue—that it was not a matter of commercial advan-

tage or disadvantage, but one simply of national honour, of whether the United States proposed to keep its word or to break it.

Page's contempt for the hair-drawn technicalities of lawyers was profound, and the tortuous effort to make the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty mean something quite different from what it said, inevitably moved him to righteous wrath. Before sailing for England he spent several days in the State Department studying the several questions that were then at issue between his country and Great Britain. A memorandum contains his impressions of the free tolls contention:

"A little later I went to Washington again to acquaint myself with the business between the United States and Great Britain. About that time the Senate confirmed my appointment, and I spent a number of days reading the recent correspondence between the two governments. The two documents that stand out in my memory are the wretched lawyer's note of Knox about the Panama tolls (I never read a less sincere, less convincing, more purely artificial argument) and Bryce's brief reply, which did have the ring of sincerity in it. The diplomatic correspondence in general seemed to me very dull stuff, and, after wading through it all day, on several nights as I went to bed the thought came to me whether this sort of activity were really worth a man's while."

Anything which affected British shipping adversely touched Great Britain in a sensitive spot; and Page had not been long in London before he perceived the acute nature of the Panama situation. In July, 1913, Col. Edward M. House reached the British capital. A letter of Page's to Sir Edward Grey gives such a succinct

description of this new and influential force in American public life that it is worth quoting:

To Sir Edward Grey

Coburg Hotel, London.

[No date.]

DEAR SIR EDWARD:

There is an American gentleman in London, the like of whom I do not know. Mr. Edward M. House is his name. He is "the silent partner" of President Wilson—that is to say, he is the most trusted political adviser and the nearest friend of the President. He is a private citizen, a man without personal political ambition, a modest, quiet, even shy fellow. He helps to make Cabinets, to shape policies, to select judges and ambassadors and suchlike merely for the pleasure of seeing that these tasks are well done.

He is suffering from over-indulgence in advising, and he has come here to rest. I cannot get him far outside his hotel, for he cares to see few people. But he is very eager to meet you.

I wonder if you would do me the honour to take luncheon at the Coburg Hotel with me, to meet him either on July 1, or 3, or 5—if you happen to be free? I shall have only you and Mr. House.

Very sincerely yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

The chief reason why Colonel House wished to meet the British Foreign Secretary was to bring him a message from President Wilson on the subject of the Panama tolls. The three men—Sir Edward, Colonel House, and Mr. Page—met at the suggested luncheon on July 3rd.

Colonel House informed the Foreign Secretary that President Wilson was now convinced that the Panama Act violated the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty and that he intended to use all his influence to secure its repeal. The matter, the American urged, was a difficult one, since it would be necessary to persuade Congress to pass a law acknowledging its mistake. The best way in which Great Britain could aid in the process was by taking no public action. If the British should keep protesting or discussing the subject acrimoniously in the press and Parliament, such a course would merely reënforce the elements that would certainly oppose the President. Any protests would give them the opportunity to set up the cry of "British dictation," and a change in the Washington policy would subject it to the criticism of having yielded to British pressure. The inevitable effect would be to defeat the whole proceeding. Colonel House therefore suggested that President Wilson be left to handle the matter in his own way and in his own time, and he assured the British statesman that the result would be satisfactory to both countries. Sir Edward Grey at once saw that Colonel House's statement of the matter was simply common sense, and expressed his willingness to leave the Panama matter in the President's hands.

Thus, from July 3, 1913, there was a complete understanding between the British Government and the Washington Administration on the question of the tolls. But neither the British nor the American public knew that President Wilson had pledged himself to a policy of repeal. All during the summer and fall of 1913 this matter was as generally discussed in England as was Mexico. Everywhere the Ambassador went—country houses, London dinner tables, the colleges and the clubs—he was constantly confronted with what was universally

regarded as America's great breach of faith. How deeply he felt in the matter his letters show.

To Edward M. House

August 25, 1913.

DEAR HOUSE:

. . . The English Government and the English people without regard to party—I hear it and feel it everywhere—are of one mind about this: they think we have acted dishonourably. They really think so—it isn't any mere political or diplomatic pretense. We made a bargain, they say, and we have repudiated it. If it were a mere bluff or game or party contention—that would be one thing. We could “bull” it through or live it down. But they look upon it as we look upon the repudiation of a debt by a state. Whatever the arguments by which the state may excuse itself, we never feel the same toward it—never quite so safe about it. They say, “You are a wonderful nation and a wonderful people. We like you. But your Government is not a government of honour. Your honourable men do not seem to get control.” You can't measure the damage that this does us. Whatever the United States may propose till this is fixed and forgotten will be regarded with a certain hesitancy. They will not fully trust the honour of our Government. They say, too, “See, you've preached arbitration and you propose peace agreements, and yet you will not arbitrate this: you know you are wrong, and this attitude proves it.” Whatever Mr. Hay might or could have done, he made a bargain. The Senate ratified it. We accepted it. Whether it were a good bargain or a bad one, we ought to keep it. The English feeling was shown just the other week when Senator Root received an honourary degree at Oxford.

The thing that gave him fame here was his speech on this treaty.¹ There is no end of ways in which they show their feeling and conviction.

Now, if in the next regular session the President takes a firm stand against the ship subsidy that this discrimination gives, couldn't Congress be carried to repeal this discrimination? For this economic objection also exists.

No Ambassador can do any very large constructive piece of work so long as this suspicion of the honour of our Government exists. Sir Edward Grey will take it up in October or November. If I could say then that the President will exert all his influence for this repeal—that would go far. If, when he takes it up, I can say nothing, it will be practically useless for me to take up any other large plan. This is the most important thing for us on the diplomatic horizon.

To the President

Dornoch, Scotland,
September 10, 1913.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I am spending ten or more of the dog days visiting the Englishman and the Scotchman in their proper setting—their country homes—where they show themselves the best of hosts and reveal their real opinions. There are, for example, in the house where I happen to be to-day, the principals of three of the Scotch universities, and a Member of Parliament, and an influential editor.

They have, of course—I mean all the educated folk I meet—the most intelligent interest in American affairs, and they have an unbounded admiration for the American people—their energy, their resourcefulness, their wealth,

¹Mr. Root's masterly speech on Panama tolls was made in the United States Senate, January 21, 1913.

their economic power and social independence. I think that no people ever really admired and, in a sense, envied another people more. They know we hold the keys of the future.

But they make a sharp distinction between our people and our Government. They are sincere, God-fearing people who speak their convictions. They cite Tammany, the Thaw case, Sulzer, the Congressional lobby, and sincerely regret that a democracy does not seem to be able to justify itself. I am constantly amazed and sometimes dumbfounded at the profound effect that the yellow press (including the American correspondents of the English papers) has had upon the British mind. Here is a most serious journalistic problem, upon which I have already begun to work seriously with some of the editors of the better London papers. But it is more than a journalistic problem. It becomes political. To eradicate this impression will take years of well-planned work. I am going to make this the subject of one of the dozen addresses that I must deliver during the next six months—"The United States as an Example of Honest and Honourable Government."

And everywhere—in circles the most friendly to us, and the best informed—I receive commiseration because of the dishonourable attitude of our Government about the Panama Canal tolls. This, I confess, is hard to meet. We made a bargain—a solemn compact—and we have broken it. Whether it were a good bargain or a bad one, a silly one or a wise one; that's far from the point. Isn't it? I confess that this bothers me. . . .

And this Canal tolls matter stands in the way of everything. It is in their minds all the time—the minds of all parties and all sections of opinion. They have no respect for Mr. Taft, for they remember that he might

have vetoed the bill; and they ask, whenever they dare, what you will do about it. They hold our Government in shame so long as this thing stands.

As for the folly of having made such a treaty—that's now passed. As for our unwillingness to arbitrate it—that's taken as a confession of guilt. . . .

We can command these people, this Government, this tight island, and its world-wide empire; they honour us, they envy us, they see the time near at hand when we shall command the capital and the commerce of the world if we unfetter our mighty people; they wish to keep very close to us. But they are suspicious of our Government because, they contend, it has violated its faith. Is it so or is it not?

Life meantime is brimful of interest; and, despite this reflex result of the English long-blunder with Ireland (how our sins come home to roost), the Great Republic casts its beams across the whole world and I was never so proud to be an American democrat, as I see it light this hemisphere in a thousand ways.

All health and mastery to you!

WALTER H. PAGE.

The story of Sir William Tyrrell's¹ visit to the White House in November, 1913, has already been told. On this occasion, it will be recalled, not only was an agreement reached on Mexico, but President Wilson also repeated the assurances already given by Colonel House on the repeal of the tolls legislation. Now that Great Britain had accepted the President's leadership in Mexico, the time was approaching when President Wilson might be expected to take his promised stand on Panama

¹ Ante: page 202.

tolls. Yet it must be repeated that there had been no definite diplomatic bargain. But Page was exerting all his efforts to establish the best relations between the two countries on the basis of fair dealing and mutual respect. Great Britain had shown her good faith in the Mexican matter; now the turn of the United States had come.

To the President

London, 6 Grosvenor Square.

January 6, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

We've travelled a long way since this Mexican trouble began—a long way with His Majesty's Government. When your policy was first flung at 'em, they showed at best a friendly incredulity: what! set up a moral standard for government in Mexico? Everybody's mind was fixed merely on the restoring of order—the safety of investments. They thought of course our army would go down in a few weeks. I recall that Sir Edward Grey asked me one day if you would not consult the European governments about the successor to Huerta, speaking of it as a problem that would come up next week. And there was also much unofficial talk about joint intervention.

Well, they've followed a long way. They apologized for Carden (that's what the Prime Minister's speech was); they ordered him to be more prudent. Then the real meaning of concessions began to get into their heads. They took up the dangers that lurked in the Government's contract with Cowdray for oil; and they pulled Cowdray out of Colombia and Nicaragua—granting the application of the Monroe Doctrine to concessions that might imperil a country's autonomy. Then Sir Edward

asked me if you would not consult him about such concessions—a long way had been travelled since his other question! Lord Haldane made the Thanksgiving speech that I suggested to him. And now they have transferred Carden. They've done all we asked and more; and, more wonderful yet, they've come to understand what we are driving at.

As this poor world goes, all this seems to me rather handsomely done. At any rate, it's square and it's friendly.

Now in diplomacy, as in other contests, there must be give and take; it's our turn.

If you see your way clear, it would help the Liberal Government (which needs help) and would be much appreciated if, before February 10th, when Parliament meets, you could say a public word friendly to our keeping the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty—on the tolls. You only, of course, can judge whether you would be justified in doing so. I presume only to assure you of the most excellent effect it would have here. If you will pardon me for taking a personal view of it, too, I will say that such an expression would cap the climax of the enormously heightened esteem and great respect in which recent events and achievements have caused you to be held here. It would put the English of all parties in the happiest possible mood toward you for whatever subsequent dealings may await us. It was as friendly a man as Kipling who said to me the night I spent with him: "You know your great Government, which does many great things greatly, does *not* lie awake o' nights to keep its promises."

It's our turn next, whenever you see your way clear.

Most heartily yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

From Edward M. House

145 East 35th Street,
New York City.

January 24, 1914.

DEAR PAGE:

I was with the President for twenty-four hours and we went over everything thoroughly.

He decided to call the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to the White House on Monday and tell them of his intentions regarding Panama tolls. We discussed whether it would be better to see some of them individually, or to take them collectively. It was agreed that the latter course was better. It was decided, however, to have Senator Jones poll the Senate in order to find just how it stood before getting the Committee together.

The reason for this quick action was in response to your letter urging that something be done before the 10th of February. . . .

Faithfully yours,
E. M. HOUSE.

On March 5th the President made good his promise by going before Congress and asking the two Houses to repeal that clause in the Panama legislation which granted preferential treatment to American coastwise shipping. The President's address was very brief and did not discuss the matter in the slightest detail. Mr. Wilson made the question one simply of national honour. The exemption, he said, clearly violated the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty and there was nothing left to do but to set the matter right. The part of the President's address that aroused the greatest interest was the conclusion:

"I ask this of you in support of the foreign policy of

the Administration. I shall not know how to deal with other matters of even greater delicacy and nearer consequence, if you do not grant it to me in ungrudging measure."

The impression that this speech made upon the statesman who then presided over the British Foreign office is evident from the following letter that he wrote to the Ambassador in Washington.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring Rice

Foreign Office,
March 13, 1914.

SIR:

In the course of a conversation with the American Ambassador to-day, I took the opportunity of saying how much I had been struck by President Wilson's Message to Congress about the Panama Canal tolls. When I read it, it struck me that, whether it succeeded or failed in accomplishing the President's object, it was something to the good of public life, for it helped to lift public life to a higher plane and to strengthen its morale.

I am, &c.,
E. GREY.

Two days after his appearance before Congress the President wrote to his Ambassador:

From the President

The White House, Washington,
March 7, 1914.

MY DEAR PAGE:

I have your letters of the twenty-second and twenty-fourth of February and I thank you for them most warmly. Happily, things are clearing up a little in the

matters which have embarrassed our relations with Great Britain, and I hope that the temper of public opinion is in fact changing there, as it seems to us from this distance to be changing.

Your letters are a lamp to my feet. I feel as I read that their analysis is searching and true.

Things over here go on a tolerably even keel. The prospect at this moment for the repeal of the tolls exemption is very good indeed. I am beginning to feel a considerable degree of confidence that the repeal will go through, and the Press of the country is certainly standing by me in great shape.

My thoughts turn to you very often with gratitude and affectionate regard. If there is ever at any time anything specific you want to learn, pray do not hesitate to ask it of me directly, if you think best.

Carden was here the other day and I spent an hour with him, but I got not even a glimpse of his mind. I showed him all of mine that he cared to see.

With warmest regards from us all,

Faithfully yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

The debate which now took place in Congress proved to be one of the stormiest in the history of that body. The proceeding did not prove to be the easy victory that the Administration had evidently expected. The struggle was protracted for three months; and it signalized Mr. Wilson's first serious conflict with the Senate—that same Senate which was destined to play such a vexatious and destructive rôle in his career. At this time, however, Mr. Wilson had reached the zenith of his control over the law-making bodies. It was early in his Presidential term, and in these early days Senators are likely to be

careful about quarrelling with the White House—especially the Senators who are members of the President's political party. In this struggle, moreover, Mr. Wilson had the intelligence and the character of the Senate largely on his side, though, strangely enough, his strongest supporters were Republicans and his bitterest opponents were Democrats. Senator Root, Senator Burton, Senator Lodge, Senator Kenyon, Senator McCumber, all Republicans, day after day and week after week upheld the national honour; while Senators O'Gorman, Chamberlain, Vardaman, and Reed, all members of the President's party, just as persistently led the fight for the baser cause. The debate inspired an outburst of Anglo-phobia which was most distressing to the best friends of the United States and Great Britain. The American press, as a whole, honoured itself by championing the President, but certain newspapers made the debate an occasion for unrestrained abuse of Great Britain, and of any one who believed that the United States should treat that nation honestly. The Hearst organs, in cartoon and editorial page, shrieked against the ancient enemy. All the well-known episodes and characters in American history—Lexington, Bunker Hill, John Paul Jones, Washington, and Franklin—were paraded as arguments against the repeal of an illegal discrimination. Petitions from the Ancient Order of Hibernians and other Irish societies were showered upon Congress—in almost unending procession they clogged the pages of the *Congressional Record*; public meetings were held in New York and elsewhere denouncing an administration that disgraced the country by "truckling" to Great Britain. The President was accused of seeking an Anglo-American Alliance and of sacrificing American shipping to the glory of British trade, while the history of our diplomatic rela-

tions was surveyed in detail for the purpose of proving that Great Britain had broken every treaty she had ever made. In the midst of this deafening hubbub the quiet voice of Senator McCumber—"we are too big in national power to be too little in national integrity"—and that of Senator Root, demolishing one after another the pettifogging arguments of the exemptionists, demonstrated that, after all, the spirit and the eloquence that had given the Senate its great fame were still influential forces in that body.

In all this excitement, Page himself came in for his share of hard knocks. Irish meetings "resolved" against the Ambassador as a statesman who "looks on English claims as superior to American rights," and demanded that President Wilson recall him. It has been the fate of practically every American ambassador to Great Britain to be accused of Anglomania. Lowell, John Hay, and Joseph H. Choate fell under the ban of those elements in American life who seem to think that the main duty of an American diplomat in Great Britain is to insult the country of which he has become the guest. In 1895 the House of Representatives solemnly passed a resolution censuring Ambassador Thomas F. Bayard for a few sentiments friendly to Great Britain which he had uttered at a public banquet. That Page was no indiscriminating idolater of Great Britain these letters have abundantly revealed. That he had the profoundest respect for the British character and British institutions has been made just as clear. With Page this was no sudden enthusiasm; the conviction that British conceptions of liberty and government and British ideals of life represented the fine flower of human progress was one that he felt deeply. The fact that these fundamentals had had the opportunity of even freer develop-

ment in America he regarded as most fortunate both for the United States and for the world. He had never concealed his belief that the destinies of mankind depended more upon the friendly coöperation of the United States and Great Britain than upon any other single influence. He had preached this in public addresses, and in his writings for twenty-five years preceding his mission to Great Britain. But the mere fact that he should hold such convictions and presume to express them as American Ambassador apparently outraged those same elements in this country who railed against Great Britain in this Panama Tolls debate.

On August 16, 1913, the City of Southampton, England, dedicated a monument in honour of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims—Southampton having been their original point of departure for Massachusetts. Quite appropriately the city invited the American Ambassador to deliver an address on this occasion; and quite appropriately the Ambassador acknowledged the debt that Americans of to-day owed to the England that had sent these adventurers to lay the foundations of new communities on foreign soil. Yet certain historic truths embodied in this very beautiful and eloquent address aroused considerable anger in certain parts of the United States. "Blood," said the Ambassador, "carries with it that particular trick of thought which makes us all English in the last resort. . . . And Puritan and Pilgrim and Cavalier, different yet, are yet one in that they are English still. And thus, despite the fusion of races and of the great contributions of other nations to her 100 millions of people and to her incalculable wealth, the United States is yet English-led and English-ruled." This was merely a way of phrasing a great historic truth—that overwhelmingly the largest element in the American

population is British in origin¹; that such vital things as its speech and its literature are English; and that our political institutions, our liberty, our law, our conceptions of morality and of life are similarly derived from the British Isles. Page applied the word "English" to Americans in the same sense in which that word is used by John Richard Green, when he traces the history of the English race from a German forest to the Mississippi Valley and the wilds of Australia. But the anti-British elements on this side of the water, taking "English-led and English-ruled" out of its context, misinterpreted the phrase as meaning that the American Ambassador had approvingly called attention to the fact that the United States was at present under the political control of Great Britain! Senator Chamberlain of Oregon presented a petition from the *Staatsverband Deutschsprechender Vereine von Oregon*, demanding the Ambassador's removal, while the Irish-American press and politicians became extremely vocal.

Animated as was this outburst, it was mild compared with the excitement caused by a speech that Page made while the Panama debate was raging in Congress. At a dinner of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, in early March, the Ambassador made a few impromptu remarks. The occasion was one of good fellowship and good humour, and Page, under the inspiration of the occasion, indulged in a few half-serious, half-jocular references to the Panama Canal and British-American good-feeling, which, when inaccurately reported, caused a great disturbance in the England-baiting press. "I

¹This is the fact that is too frequently lost sight of in current discussions of the melting pot. In the *Atlantic Monthly* for August, 1920, Mr. William S. Rossiter, for many years chief clerk of the United States Census and a statistician of high standing, shows that, of the 95,000,000 white people of the United States, 55,000-000 trace their origin to England, Scotland, and Wales.

would not say that we constructed the Panama Canal even for you," he said, "for I am speaking with great frankness and not with diplomatic indirection. We built it for reasons of our own. But I will say that it adds to the pleasure of that great work that you will profit by it. You will profit most by it, for you have the greatest carrying trade." A few paragraphs on the Monroe Doctrine, which practically repeated President Wilson's Mobile speech on that subject, but in which Mr. Page used the expression, "we prefer that European Powers shall acquire no more territory on this continent," alarmed those precisians in language, who pretended to believe that the Ambassador had used the word "prefer" in its literal sense, and interpreted the sentence to mean that, while the United States would "prefer" that Europe should not overrun North and South America, it would really raise no serious objection if Europe did so.

Senator Chamberlain of Oregon, who by this time had apparently become the Senatorial leader of the anti-Page propaganda, introduced a resolution demanding that the Ambassador furnish the Senate a complete copy of this highly pro-British outgiving. The copy was furnished forthwith—and with that the tempest subsided.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
March 18, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

About this infernal racket in the Senate over my poor speech, I have telegraphed you all there is to say. Of course, it was a harmless courtesy—no bowing low to the British or any such thing—as it was spoken and heard. Of course, too, nothing would have been said about it but for the controversy over the Canal tolls. That was

my mistake—in being betrayed by the friendly dinner and the high compliments paid to us into mentioning a subject under controversy.

I am greatly distressed lest possibly it may embarrass you. I do hope not.

I think I have now learned *that* lesson pretty thoroughly. These Anglophobiacs—Irish and Panama—hound me wherever I go. I think I told you of one of their correspondents, who one night got up and yawned at a public dinner as soon as I had spoken and said to his neighbours: “Well, I’ll go, the Ambassador didn’t say anything that I can get him into trouble about.”

I shall, hereafter, write out my speeches and have them gone over carefully by my little Cabinet of Secretaries. Yet something (perhaps not much) will be lost. For these people are infinitely kind and friendly and courteous.

They cannot be driven by anybody to do anything, but they can be led by us to do anything—by the use of spontaneous courtesy. It is by spontaneous courtesy that I have achieved whatever I have achieved, and it is for this that those like me who do like me. Of course, what some of the American newspapers have said is true—that I am too free and too untrained to be a great Ambassador. But the conventional type of Ambassador would not be worth his salt to represent the United States here now, when they are eager to work with us for the peace of the world, if they are convinced of our honour and right-mindedness and the genuineness of our friendship.

I talked this over with Sir Edward Grey the other day, and after telling me that I need fear no trouble at this end of the line, he told me how severely he is now criticized by a “certain element” for “bowing too low to the

Americans." We then each bowed low to the other. The yellow press and Chamberlain would give a year's growth for a photograph of us in that posture!

I am infinitely obliged to you for your kind understanding and your toleration of my errors.

Yours always heartily,

WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President.

P. S. The serious part of the speech—made to convince the financial people, who are restive about Mexico, that we do not mean to forbid legitimate investments in Central America—has had a good effect here. I have received the thanks of many important men.

W. H. P.

From the President

The White House, Washington,
March 25, 1914.

MY DEAR PAGE:

Thank you for your little note of March thirteenth.¹ You may be sure that none of us who knew you or read the speech felt anything but admiration for it. It is very astonishing to me how some Democrats in the Senate themselves bring these artificial difficulties on the Administration, and it distresses me not a little. Mr. Bryan read your speech yesterday to the Cabinet, who greatly enjoyed it. It was at once sent to the Senate and I hope will there be given out for publication in full.

I want you to feel constantly how I value the intelligent and effective work you are doing in London. I do not know what I should do without you.

The fight is on now about the tolls, but I feel perfectly confident of winning in the matter, though there

¹The Ambassador's letter is dated March 18th.

is not a little opposition in Congress—more in the House, it strangely turns out, where a majority of the Democrats originally voted against the exemption, than in the Senate, where a majority of the Democrats voted for it. The vicissitudes of politics are certainly incalculable.

With the warmest regard, in necessary haste,
Cordially and faithfully yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

HON. WALTER H. PAGE,
American Embassy,
London, England.

To the President

American Embassy, London,
March 2, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I have read in the newspapers here that, after you had read my poor, unfortunate speech, you remarked to callers that you regarded it as proper. I cannot withhold this word of affectionate thanks.

I do not agree with you, heartily as I thank you. The speech itself, in the surroundings and the atmosphere, was harmless and was perfectly understood. But I ought not to have been betrayed into forgetting that the subject was about to come up for fierce discussion in Congress. . . .

Of course, I know that the whole infernal thing is cooked up to beat you, if possible. But that is the greater reason why you must win. I am willing to be sacrificed, if that will help—for forgetting the impending row or for any reason you will.

I suppose we've got to go through such a struggle to pull our Government and our people up to an understanding of our own place in the world—a place so high

and big and so powerful that all the future belongs to us. From an economic point of view, we *are* the world; and from a political point of view also. How any man who sees this can have any feeling but pity for the Old World, passes understanding. Our rôle is to treat it most courteously and to make it respect our character—nothing more. Time will do the rest.

I congratulate you most heartily on the character of most of your opposition—the wild Irish (they must be sat upon some time, why not now?), the Clark¹ crowd (characteristically making a stand on a position of dishonour), the Hearst press, and demagogues generally. I have confidence in the people.

This stand is necessary to set us right before the world, to enable us to build up an influential foreign policy, to make us respected and feared, and to make the Democratic Party the party of honour, and to give it the best reason to live and to win.

May I make a suggestion?

The curiously tenacious hold that Anglophobia has on a certain class of our people—might it not be worth your while to make, at some convenient time and in some natural way, a direct attack on it—in a letter to someone, which could be published, or in some address, or possibly in a statement to a Senate committee, which could be given to the press? Say how big and strong and sure-of-the-future we are; so big that we envy nobody, and that those who have Anglophobia or any Europe-phobia are the only persons who “truckle” to any foreign folk or power; that in this tolls-fight all the Continental governments are a unit; that we respect them all, fear none, have no favours, except proper favours among friendly

¹Mr. Champ Clark, Speaker of the House of Representatives, was one of the most blatant opponents of Panama repeal.

nations, to ask of anybody; and that the idea of a "trade" with England for holding off in Mexico is (if you will excuse my French) a common gutter lie.

This may or may not be wise; but you will forgive me for venturing to suggest it. It is *we* who are the proud and erect and patriotic Americans, fearing nobody; but the other fellows are fooling some of the people in making them think that *they* are.

Yours most gratefully,

WALTER H. PAGE.

To the President.

From the President

The White House, Washington,

April 2, 1914.

MY DEAR PAGE:

Please do not distress yourself about that speech. I think with you that it was a mistake to touch upon that matter while it was right hot, because any touch would be sure to burn the finger; but as for the speech itself, I would be willing to subscribe to every bit of it myself, and there can be no rational objection to it. We shall try to cool the excited persons on this side of the water and I think nothing further will come of it. In the meantime, pray realize how thoroughly and entirely you are enjoying my confidence and admiration.

Your letter about Cowdray and Murray was very illuminating and will be very serviceable to me. I have come to see that the real knowledge of the relations between countries in matters of public policy is to be gained at country houses and dinner tables, and not in diplomatic correspondence; in brief, that when we know the men and the currents of opinion, we know more than foreign ministers can tell us; and your letters give me, in a thor-

oughly dignified way, just the sidelights that are necessary to illuminate the picture. I am heartily obliged to you.

All unite with me in the warmest regards as always.

In haste,

Faithfully yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

HON. WALTER H. PAGE,

American Embassy,

London, England.

A note of a conversation with Sir Edward Grey touches the same point: "April 1, 1914. Sir Edward Grey recalled to me to-day that he had waited for the President to take up the Canal tolls controversy at his convenience. 'When he took it up at his own time to suit his own plans, he took it up in the most admirable way possible.' This whole story is too good to be lost. If the repeal of the tolls clause passes the Senate, I propose to make a speech in the House of Commons on 'The Proper Way for Great Governments to Deal with One Another,' and use this experience.

"Sir Edward also spoke of being somewhat 'depressed' by the fierce opposition to the President on the tolls question—the extent of Anglophobia in the United States.

"Here is a place for a campaign of education—Chautauqua and whatnot.

"The amount of Anglophobia is great. But I doubt if it be as great as it seems; for it is organized and is very vociferous. If you collected together or thoroughly organized all the people in the United States who have birthmarks on their faces, you'd be 'depressed' by the number of them."

Nothing could have more eloquently proved the truth of this last remark than the history of this Panama bill itself. After all the politicians in the House and Senate had filled pages of the *Congressional Record* with denunciations of Great Britain—most of it intended for the entertainment of Irish-Americans and German-Americans in the constituencies—the two Houses proceeded to the really serious business of voting. The House quickly passed the bill by 216 to 71, and the Senate by 50 to 35. Apparently the amount of Anglophobia was not portentous, when it came to putting this emotion to the test of counting heads. The bill went at once to the President, was signed—and the dishonour was atoned for.

Mr. and Mrs. Page were attending a ball in Buckingham Palace when the great news reached London. The gathering represented all that was most distinguished in the official and diplomatic life of the British capital. The word was rapidly passed from guest to guest, and the American Ambassador and his wife soon found themselves the centre of a company which could hardly restrain itself in expressing its admiration for the United States. Never in the history of the country had American prestige stood so high as on that night. The King and the Prime Minister were especially affected by this display of fair-dealing in Washington. The slight commercial advantage which Great Britain had obtained was not the thought that was uppermost in everybody's mind. The thing that really moved these assembled statesmen and diplomats was the fact that something new had appeared in the history of legislative chambers. A great nation had committed an outrageous wrong—that was something that had happened many times before in all countries. But the unprecedented

thing was that this same nation had exposed its fault boldly to the world—had lifted up its hands and cried, “We have sinned!” and then had publicly undone its error. Proud as Page had always been of his country, that moment was perhaps the most triumphant in his life. The action of Congress emphasized all that he had been saying of the ideals of the United States, and gave point to his arguments that justice and honour and right, and not temporary selfish interest, should control the foreign policy of any nation which really claimed to be enlightened. The general feeling of Great Britain was perhaps best expressed by the remark made to Mrs. Page, on this occasion, by Lady D——:

“The United States has set a high standard for all nations to live up to. I don’t believe that there is any other nation that would have done it.”

One significant feature of this great episode was the act of Congress in accepting the President’s statement that the repeal of the Panama discrimination was a necessary preliminary to the success of American foreign policy. Mr. Wilson’s declaration, that, unless this legislation should be repealed, he would not “know how to deal with other matters of even greater delicacy and nearer consequence” had puzzled Congress and the country. The debates show the keenest curiosity as to what the President had in mind. The newspapers turned the matter over and over, without obtaining any clew to the mystery. Some thought that the President had planned to intervene in Mexico, and that the tolls legislation was the consideration demanded by Great Britain for a free hand in this matter. But this correspondence has already demolished that theory. Others thought that Japan was in some way involved—but that explanation also failed to satisfy.

Congress accepted the President's statement trustfully and blindly, and passed the asked-for legislation. Up to the present moment this passage in the Presidential message has been unexplained. Page's papers, however, disclose what seems to be a satisfactory solution to the mystery. They show that the President and Colonel House and Page were at this time engaged in a negotiation of the utmost importance. At the very time that the tolls bill was under discussion Colonel House was making arrangements for a visit to Great Britain, France, and Germany, the purpose of which was to bring these nations to some kind of an understanding that would prevent a European war. This evidently was the great business that could not be disclosed at the time and for which the repeal of the tolls legislation was the necessary preliminary.

CHAPTER IX

AMERICA TRIES TO PREVENT THE EUROPEAN WAR

PAGE'S mind, from the day of his arrival in England, had been filled with that portent which was the most outstanding fact in European life. Could nothing be done to prevent the dangers threatened by European militarism? Was there no way of forestalling the war which seemed every day to be approaching nearer? The dates of the following letters, August, 1913, show that this was one of the first ideas which Page presented to the new Administration.

To Edward M. House

Aug. 28, 1913.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

. . . Everything is lovely and the goose hangs high. We're having a fine time. Only, only, only—I do wish to do something constructive and lasting. Here are great navies and armies and great withdrawals of men from industry—an enormous waste. Here are kings and courts and gold lace and ceremonies which, without producing anything, require great cost to keep them going. Here are all the privileges and taxes that this state of things implies—every one a hindrance to human progress. We are free from most of these. We have more people and more capable people and many times more territory than both England and Germany; and we have more *potential* wealth than all Europe. They know that.

They'd like to find a way to escape. The Hague programmes, for the most part, just lead them around a circle in the dark back to the place where they started. Somebody needs to *do* something. If we could find some friendly use for these navies and armies and kings and things—in the service of humanity—they'd follow us. We ought to find a way to use them in cleaning up the tropics under our leadership and under our code of ethics—that everything must be done for the good of the tropical peoples and that nobody may annex a foot of land. They want a job. Then they'd quit sitting on their haunches, growling at one another.

I wonder if we couldn't serve notice that the land-stealing game is forever ended and that the cleaning up of backward lands is now in order—for the people that live there; and then invite Europe's help to make the tropics as healthful as the Panama Zone?

There's no future in Europe's vision—no long look ahead. They give all their thought to the immediate danger. Consider this Balkan War; all European energy was spent merely to keep the Great Powers at peace. The two wars in the Balkans have simply impoverished the people—left the world that much worse than it was before. Nobody has considered the well-being or the future of those peoples nor of their land. The Great Powers are mere threats to one another, content to check, one the other! There can come no help to the progress of the world from this sort of action—no step forward.

Work on a world-plan. Nothing but blue chips, you know. Is it not possible that Mexico may give an entering wedge for this kind of thing?

Heartily yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

In a memorandum, written about the same time, Mr. Page explains his idea in more detail:

Was there ever greater need than there is now of a first-class mind unselfishly working on world problems? The ablest ruling minds are engaged on domestic tasks. There is no world-girdling intelligence at work in government. On the continent of Europe, the Kaiser is probably the foremost man. Yet he cannot think far beyond the provincial views of the Germans. In England, Sir Edward Grey is the largest-visioned statesman. All the Europeans are spending their thought and money in watching and checkmating one another and in maintaining their armed and balanced *status quo*.

A way must be found out of this stagnant watching. Else a way will have to be fought out of it; and a great European war would set the Old World, perhaps the whole world, back a long way; and thereafter, the present armed watching would recur; we should have gained nothing. It seems impossible to talk the Great Powers out of their fear of one another or to "Hague" them out of it. They'll never be persuaded to disarm. The only way left seems to be to find some common and useful work for these great armies to do. Then, perhaps, they'll *work* themselves out of their jealous position. Isn't this sound psychology?

To produce a new situation, the vast energy that now spends itself in maintaining armies and navies must find a new outlet. Something new must be found for them to do, some great unselfish task that they can do together.

Nobody can lead in such a new era but the United States.

May there not come such a chance in Mexico—to clean out bandits, yellow fever, malaria, hookworm—all to

make the country healthful, safe for life and investment, and for orderly self-government at last? What we did in Cuba might thus be made the beginning of a new epoch in history—conquest for the sole benefit of the conquered, worked out by a sanitary reformation. The new sanitation will reclaim all tropical lands; but the work must be first done by military power—probably from the outside.

May not the existing military power of Europe conceivably be diverted, gradually, to this use? One step at a time, as political and financial occasions arise? As presently in Mexico?

This present order must change. It holds the Old World still. It keeps all parts of the world apart, in spite of the friendly cohesive forces of trade and travel. It keeps back self-government and the progress of man.

And the tropics cry out for sanitation, which is at first an essentially military task.

A strange idea this may have seemed in August, 1913, a year before the outbreak of the European war; yet the scheme is not dissimilar to the "mandatory" principle, adopted by the Versailles Peace Conference as the only practical method of dealing with backward peoples. In this work, as in everything that would help mankind on its weary way to a more efficient and more democratic civilization, Page regarded the United States, Great Britain, and the British Dominions as inevitable partners. Anything that would bring these two nations into a closer coopération he looked upon as a step making for human advancement. He believed that any opportunity of sweeping away misconceptions and prejudices and of impressing upon the two peoples their common mission should be eagerly seized by the statesmen of the two countries. And circumstances at this particular

moment, Page believed, presented a large opportunity of this kind. It is one of the minor ironies of modern history that the United States and Great Britain should have selected 1914 as a year for a great peace celebration. That year marked the one hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, and in 1913 comprehensive plans had already been formed for observing this impressive centennial. The plan was to make it more than the mere observance of a hundred years of peaceful intercourse; it was the intention to use the occasion to emphasize the fundamental identity of American and British ideals and to lay the foundation of a permanent understanding and friendship. The erection of a monument to Abraham Lincoln at Westminster—a plan that has since been realized—was one detail of this programme. Another was the restoration of Sulgrave Manor, the English country seat of the Washingtons, and its preservation as a place where the peoples of both countries could share their common traditions. Page now dared to hope that President Wilson might associate himself with this great purpose to the extent of coming to England and accepting this gift in the name of the American nation. Such a Presidential visit, he believed, would exercise a mighty influence in forestalling a threatening European war. The ultimate purpose, that is, was world peace—precisely the same motive that led President Wilson, in 1919, to make a European pilgrimage.

This idea was no passing fancy with Page: it was with him a favourite topic of conversation. Such a presidential visit, he believed, would accomplish more than any other influences in dissipating the clouds that were darkening the European landscape. He would elaborate the idea at length in discussions with his intimates.

"What I want," he would say, "is to have the President of the United States and the King of England stand up side by side and let the world take a good look at them!"

To Edward M. House

August 25, 1913.

. . . I wrote him (President Wilson) my plan—a mere outline. He'll only smile now. But when the tariff and the currency and Mexico are off his hands, and when he can be invited to come and deliver an oration on George Washington next year at the presentation of the old Washington homestead here, he may be "pushed over." You do the pushing. Mrs. Page has invited the young White House couple to visit us on their honeymoon.¹ Encourage that and that may encourage the larger plan later. Nothing else would give such a friendly turn to the whole world as the President's coming here. The old Earth would sit up and rub its eyes and take notice to whom it belongs. This visit might prevent an English-German war and an American-Japanese war, by this mere show of friendliness. It would be one of the greatest occasions of our time. Even at my little speeches, they "whoop it up!" What would they do over the President's!

But at that time Washington was too busy with its domestic programme to consider such a proposal seriously. "Your two letters," wrote Colonel House in reply, "have come to me and lifted me out of the rut of things and given me a glimpse of a fair land. What you are thinking of and what you want this Administration to do is

¹Mr. and Mrs. Francis B. Sayre, son-in-law and daughter of President Wilson.

beyond the power of accomplishment for the moment. My desk is covered with matters of no lasting importance, but which come to me as a part of the day's work, and which must be done if I am to help lift the load that is pressing upon the President. It tells me better than anything else what he has to bear, and how utterly futile it is for him to attempt such problems as you present."

From the President

MY DEAR PAGE:

. . . As for your suggestion that I should myself visit England during my term of office, I must say that I agree with all your arguments for it, and yet the case against the President's leaving the country, particularly now that he is expected to exercise a constant leadership in all parts of the business of the government, is very strong and I am afraid overwhelming. It might be the beginning of a practice of visiting foreign countries which would lead Presidents rather far afield.

It is a most attractive idea, I can assure you, and I turn away from it with the greatest reluctance.

We hear golden opinions of the impression you are making in England, and I have only to say that it is just what I had expected.

Cordially and faithfully yours,
WOODROW WILSON.

HON. WALTER H. PAGE,
American Embassy,
London, England.

In December, however, evidently Colonel House's mind had turned to the general subject that had so engaged that of the Ambassador.

From Edward M. House

145 East 35th Street,
New York City.
December 13th, 1913.

DEAR PAGE:

In my budget of yesterday I did not tell you of the suggestion which I made to Sir William Tyrrell when he was here, and which I also made to the President.

It occurred to me that between us all we might bring about the naval holiday which Winston Churchill has proposed. My plan is that I should go to Germany in the spring and see the Kaiser, and try to win him over to the thought that is uppermost in our mind and that of the British Government.

Sir William thought there was a good sporting chance of success. He offered to let me have all the correspondence that had passed between the British and German governments upon this question so that I might be thoroughly informed as to the position of them both. He thought I should go directly to Germany without stopping in England, and that Gerard should prepare the Kaiser for my coming, telling him of my relations with the President. He thought this would be sufficient without any further credentials.

In other words, he would do with the Kaiser what you did with Sir Edward Grey last summer.

I spoke to the President about the matter and he seemed pleased with the suggestion; in fact, I might say, he was enthusiastic. He said, just as Sir William did, that it would be too late for this year's budget; but he made a suggestion that he get the Appropriations Committee to incorporate a clause, permitting him to eliminate

certain parts of the battleship budget in the event that other nations declared for a naval holiday. So this will be done and will further the plan.

Now I want to get you into the game. If you think it advisable, take the matter up with Sir William Tyrrell and then with Sir Edward Grey, or directly with Sir Edward, if you prefer, and give me the benefit of your advice and conclusions.

Please tell Sir William that I lunched at the Embassy with the Spring Rices yesterday, and had a satisfactory talk with both Lady Spring Rice and Sir Cecil.

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

It is apparent from Page's letters that the suggestion now contained in Colonel House's communication would receive a friendly hearing. The idea that Colonel House suggested was merely the initial stage of a plan which soon took on more ambitious proportions. At the time of Sir William Tyrrell's American visit, the Winston Churchill proposal for a naval holiday was being actively discussed by the British and the American press. In one form or another it had been figuring in the news for nearly two years. Viscount Haldane, in the course of his famous visit to Berlin in February, 1912, had attempted to reach some understanding with the German Government on the limitation of the German and the British fleets. The Agadir crisis of the year before had left Europe with a bad state of nerves, and there was a general belief that only some agreement on shipbuilding could prevent a European war. Lord Haldane and von Tiritz spent many hours discussing the relative sizes of the two navies, but the discussions led to no definite under-

standing. In March, 1913, Mr. Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, took up the same subject in a different form. In this speech he first used the words "naval holiday," and proposed that Germany and Great Britain should cease building first-class battleships for one year, thus giving the two nations a breathing space, during which time they might discuss their future plans in the hope of reaching a permanent agreement. The matter lagged again until October 18, 1913, when, in a speech at Manchester, Mr. Churchill placed his proposal in this form: "Now, we say to our great neighbour, Germany, 'If you will put off beginning your two ships for twelve months from the ordinary date when you would have begun them, we will put off beginning our four ships, in absolute good faith, for exactly the same period.'" About the same time Premier Asquith made it clear that the Ministry was back of the suggested programme. In Germany, however, the "naval holiday" soon became an object of derision. The official answer was that Germany had a definite naval law and that the Government could not entertain any suggestion of departing from it. Great Britain then answered that, for every keel Germany laid down, the Admiralty would lay down two. The outcome, therefore, of this attempt at friendship was that the two nations had been placed farther apart than ever.

The dates of this discussion, it will be observed, almost corresponded with the period covered by the Tyrrell visit to America. This fact, and Page's letters of this period, had apparently implanted in Colonel House's mind an ambition for definite action. He now proposed that President Wilson should take up the broken threads of the rapprochement and attempt to bring them together again. From this, as will be made plain, the plan developed into something more comprehensive. Page's

ideas on the treatment of backward nations had strongly impressed both the President and Colonel House. The discussion on Mexico which had just taken place between the American and the British Governments seemed to have developed ideas that could have a much wider application. The fundamental difficulties in Mexico were not peculiar to that country nor indeed to Latin-America. Perhaps the most prolific cause of war among the more enlightened countries was that produced by the jealousies and antagonisms which were developed by their contacts with unprogressive peoples—in the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire, Asia, and the Far East. The method of dealing with such peoples, which the United States had found so successful in Cuba and the Philippines, had proved that there was just one honourable way of dealing with the less fortunate and more primitive races in all parts of the world. Was it not possible to bring the greatest nations, especially the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, to some agreement on this question, as well as on the question of disarmament? This once accomplished, the way could be prepared for joint action on the numerous other problems which were then threatening the peace of the world. The League of Nations was then not even a phrase, but the plan that was forming in Colonel House's mind was at least some scheme for permanent international coöperation. For several years Germany had been the nation which had proved the greatest obstacle to such international friendliness and arbitration. The Kaiser had destroyed both Hague Conferences as influential forces in the remaking of the world; and in the autumn of 1913 he had taken on a more belligerent attitude than ever. If this attempt to establish a better condition of things was to succeed, Germany's coöperation would be indispensable. This is the

reason why Colonel House proposed first of all to visit Berlin.

From Edward M. House

145 East 35th Street,
New York City.
January 4th, 1914.

DEAR PAGE:

. . . Benj. Ide Wheeler¹ took lunch with me the other day. He is just back from Germany and he is on the most intimate terms with the Kaiser. He tells me he often takes dinner with the family alone, and spends the evening with them.

I know, now, the different Cabinet officials who have the Kaiser's confidence and I know his attitude toward England, naval armaments, war, and world politics in general.

Wheeler spoke to me very frankly and the information he gave me will be invaluable in the event that my plans carry. The general idea is to bring about a sympathetic understanding between England, Germany, and America, not only upon the question of disarmament, but upon other matters of equal importance to themselves, and to the world at large.

It seems to me that Japan should come into this pact, but Wheeler tells me that the Kaiser feels very strongly upon the question of Asiatics. He thinks the contest of the future will be between the Eastern and Western civilizations. . . .

Your friend always,
E. M. HOUSE.

By January 4, 1914, the House-Wilson plan had thus grown into an Anglo-American-German "pact," to deal

¹ Ex-President of the University of California, Roosevelt Professor at the University of Berlin, 1909-10.

not only with "disarmament, but other matters of equal importance to themselves and to the world at large." Page's response to this idea was consistent and characteristic. He had no faith in Germany and believed that the existence of Kaiserism was incompatible with the extension of the democratic ideal. Even at this early time—eight months before the outbreak of the World War—he had no enthusiasm for anything in the nature of an alliance, or a "pact," that included Germany as an equal partner. He did, however, have great faith in the coöperation of the English-speaking peoples as a force that would make for permanent peace and international justice. In his reply to Colonel House, therefore, Page fell back at once upon his favourite plan for an understanding between the United States, Great Britain, and the British colonies. That he would completely sympathize with the Washington aspiration for disarmament was to be expected.

To Edward M. House

January 2, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

You have set my imagination going. I've been thinking of this thing for months, and now you've given me a fresh start. It can be worked out somehow—doubtless, not in the form that anybody may at first see; but experiment and frank discussion will find a way.

As I think of it, turning it this way and that, there always comes to me just as I am falling to sleep this reflection: the English-speaking peoples now rule the world in all essential facts. They alone and Switzerland have permanent free government. In France there's freedom—but for how long? In Germany and Austria—hardly. In the Scandinavian States—yes, but they

are small and exposed as are Belgium and Holland. In the big secure South American States—yes, it's coming. In Japan—? Only the British lands and the United States have secure liberty. They also have the most treasure, the best fighters, the most land, the most ships—the future in fact.

Now, because George Washington warned us against alliances, we've gone on as if an alliance were a kind of smallpox. Suppose there were—let us say for argument's sake—the tightest sort of an alliance, offensive and defensive, between all Britain, colonies and all, and the United States—what would happen? Anything we'd say would go, whether we should say, "Come in out of the wet," or, "Disarm." That might be the beginning of a real world-alliance and union to accomplish certain large results—disarmament, for instance, or arbitration—dozens of good things.

Of course, we'd have to draw and quarter the O'Gormans.¹ But that ought to be done anyhow in the general interest of good sense in the world. We could force any nation into this "trust" that we wanted in it.

Isn't it time we tackled such a job frankly, fighting out the Irish problem once for all, and having done with it?

I'm not proposing a programme. I'm only thinking out loud. I see little hope of doing anything so long as we choose to be ruled by an obsolete remark made by George Washington.

W. H. P.

January 11, 1914."

. . . But this armament flurry is worth serious thought. Lloyd George gave out an interview, seeming to imply the necessity of reducing the navy programme.

¹James A. O'Gorman was the anti-British Senator from New York State at this time working hard against the repeal of the Panama tolls discrimination.

The French allies of the British went up in the air! They raised a great howl. Churchill went to see them, to soothe them. They would not be soothed. Now the Prime Minister is going to Paris—ostensibly to see his daughter off to the Riviera. Nobody believes that reason. They say he's going to smooth out the French. Meantime the Germans are gleeful.

And the British Navy League is receiving money and encouraging letters from British subjects, praying greater activity to keep the navy up. You touch the navy and you touch the quick—that's the lesson. It's an enormous excitement that this small incident has caused.

W. H. P.

To Edward M. House

London, February 24, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

You'll be interested in these pamphlets by Sir Max Waechter, who has opened an office here and is spending much money to "federate" Europe, and to bring a lessening of armaments. I enclose also an article about him from the *Daily Telegraph*, which tells how he has interviewed most of the Old World monarchs. Get also, immediately, the new two-volume life of Lord Lyons, Minister to the United States during the Civil War, and subsequently Ambassador to France. You will find an interesting account of the campaign of about 1870 to reduce armaments, when old Bismarck dumped the whole basket of apples by marching against France. You know I sometimes fear some sort of repetition of that experience. Some government (probably Germany) will see bankruptcy staring it in the face and the easiest way out will seem a great war. Bankruptcy before a war would be ignominious; after a war, it could be charged to

"Glory." It'll take a long time to bankrupt England. It's unspeakably rich; they pay enormous taxes, but they pay them out of their incomes, not out of their principal, except their inheritance tax. That looks to me as if it came out of the principal. . . .

I hope you had a good time in Texas and escaped some cold weather. This deceptive sort of winter here is grippe-laden. I've had the thing, but I'm now getting over it. . . .

This Benton¹-Mexican business is causing great excitement here.

Always heartily yours,
W. H. P.

P. S. There's nothing like the President. By George! the passage of the arbitration treaty (renewal) almost right off the bat, and apparently the tolls discrimination coming presently to its repeal! Sir Edward Grey remarked to me yesterday: "Things are clearing up!" I came near saying to him: "Have you any miracles in mind that you'd like to see worked?" Wilson stock is at a high premium on this side of the water in spite of the momentary impatience caused by Benton's death.

W. H. P.

From Edward M. House

145 East 35th Street,

New York City.

April 19th, 1914.¹

DEAR PAGE:

I have had a long talk with Mr. Laughlin.² At first he thought I would not have more than one chance in a

¹ In February, 1915, William S. Benton, an English subject who had spent the larger part of his life in Mexico, was murdered in the presence of Francisco Villa.

² Mr. Irwin Laughlin, first secretary of the American Embassy in London; at this time spending a few weeks in the United States.

million to do anything with the Kaiser, but after talking with him further, he concluded that I would have a fairly good sporting chance. I have about concluded to take it.

If I can do anything, I can do it in a few days. I was with the President most of last week. . . .

He spoke of your letters to him and to me as being classics, and said they were the best letters, as far as he knew, that any one had ever written. Of course you know how heartily I concur in this. He said that sometime they should be published.

The President is now crystallizing his mind in regard to the Federal Reserve Board, and if you are not to remain in London, then he would probably put Houston on the Board and ask you to take the Secretaryship of Agriculture.

You have no idea the feeling that is being aroused by the tolls question. The Hearst papers are screaming at all of us every day. They have at last honoured me with their abuse. . . .

With love and best wishes, I am,

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

From Edward M. House

145 East 35th Street,

New York City.

April 20th, 1914.

DEAR PAGE:

. . . It is our purpose to sail on the *Imperator*, May 16th, and go directly to Germany. I expect to be there a week or more, but Mrs. House will reach London by the 1st or 2nd of June. . . .

Our friend¹ in Washington thinks it is worth while for

¹ Obviously President Wilson.

me to go to Germany, and that determines the matter. The press is shrieking to-day over the Mexican situation, but I hope they will be disappointed. It is not the intention to do anything further for the moment than to blockade the ports, and unless some overt act is made from the North, our troops will not cross the border.

Your friend always,

E. M. HOUSE.

To Edward M. House

London, April 27, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

Of course you decided wisely to carry out your original Berlin plan, and you ought never to have had a moment's hesitation, if you did have any hesitation. I do not expect you to produce any visible or immediate results. I hope I am mistaken in this. But you know that the German Government has a well-laid progressive plan for shipbuilding for a certain number of years. I believe that the work has, in fact, already been arranged for. But that has nothing to do with the case. You are going to see what effect you can produce on the mind of a man. Perhaps you will never know just what effect you will produce. Yet the fact that you are who you are, that you make this journey for this especial purpose, that you are everlastingly right—these are enough.

Moreover, you can't ever tell results, nor can you afford to make your plans in this sort of high work with the slightest reference to probable results. That's the bigness and the glory of it. Any ordinary man can, on any ordinary day, go and do a task, the favourable results of which may be foreseen. *That's* easy. The big thing is to go confidently to work on a task, the results of which nobody can possibly foresee—a task so vague and

improbable of definite results that small men hesitate. It is in this spirit that very many of the biggest things in history have been done. Wasn't the purchase of Louisiana such a thing? Who'd ever have supposed that that could have been brought about? I applaud your errand and I am eagerly impatient to hear the results. When will *you* get here? I assume that Mrs. House will not go with you to Berlin. No matter so you both turn up here for a good long stay.

I've taken me a little bit of a house about twenty miles out of town whither we are going in July as soon as we can get away from London. I hope to stay down there till far into October, coming up to London about thrice a week. That's the dull season of the year. It's a charming little country place—big enough for you to visit us. . . .

From Edward M. House

An Bord des Dampfers *Imperator*
den May 21, 1914.

Hamburg-Amerika Linie

DEAR PAGE:

Here we are again. The Wallaces¹ land at Cherbourg, Friday morning, and we of course go on to Berlin. I wish I might have the benefit of your advice just now, for the chances for success in this great adventure are slender enough at best. The President has done his part in the letter I have with me, and it is clearly up to me to do mine. . . .

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

¹ Mr. Hugh C. Wallace, afterward Ambassador to France, and Mrs. Wallace. Mr. and Mrs. Wallace accompanied Mr. and Mrs. House on this journey.

It will be observed that Colonel House had taken the advice of Sir William Tyrrell, and had sailed directly to Germany on a German ship—the *Imperator*. Ambassador Gerard had made preparations for his reception in Berlin, and the American soon had long talks with Admiral von Tirpitz, Falkenhayn, Von Jagow, Solf, and others. Von Bethmann-Hollweg's wife died almost on the day of his arrival in Berlin, so it was impossible for him to see the Chancellor—the man who would have probably been the most receptive to these peace ideas. All the leaders of the government, except Von Tirpitz, gave Colonel House's proposals a respectful if somewhat cynical hearing. Von Tirpitz was openly and demonstratively hostile. The leader of the German Navy simply bristled with antagonism at any suggestion for peace or disarmament or world coöperation. He consumed a large part of the time which Colonel House spent with him denouncing England and all its works. Hatred of the "Island Kingdom" was apparently the consuming passion of his existence. On the whole, Von Tirpitz thus made no attempt to conceal his feeling that the purpose of the House mission was extremely distasteful to him. The other members of the Government, while not so tactlessly hostile, were not particularly encouraging. The usual objections to disarmament were urged—the fear of other Powers, the walled-in state of Germany, the vigilant enemies against which it was necessary constantly to be prepared and watchful. Even more than the unsympathetic politeness of the German Cabinet the general atmosphere of Berlin was depressing to Colonel House. The militaristic oligarchy was absolutely in control. Militarism possessed not only the army, the navy, and the chief officers of state, but the populace as well. One almost trivial circumstance has left a lasting

impression on Colonel House's mind. Ambassador Gerard took him out one evening for a little relaxation. Both Mr. Gerard and Colonel House were fond of target shooting and the two men sought one of the numerous rifle galleries of Berlin. They visited gallery after gallery, but could not get into one. Great crowds lined up at every place, waiting their turns at the target; it seemed as though every able-bodied man in Berlin was spending all his time improving his marksmanship. But this was merely a small indication of the atmosphere of militarism which prevailed in the larger aspects of life. Colonel House found himself in a strange place to preach international accord for the ending of war!

He had come to Berlin not merely to talk with the Cabinet heads; his goal was the Kaiser himself. But he perceived at once a persistent opposition to his plan. As he was the President's personal representative, and carried a letter from the President to the Kaiser, an audience could not be refused—indeed, it had already been duly arranged; but there was a quiet opposition to his consorting with the "All Highest" alone. It was not usual, Colonel House was informed, for His Imperial Majesty to discuss such matters except in the presence of a representative of the Foreign Office. Germany had not yet recovered from the shock which the Emperor's conversation with certain foreign correspondents had given the nation. The effects were still felt of the famous interviews of October 28, 1908, which, when published in the London *Telegraph*, had caused the bitterest resentment in Great Britain. The Kaiser had given his solemn word that he would indulge in no more indiscretions of this sort, and a private interview with Colonel House was regarded by his advisers as a possible infraction of that promise. But the American would not be denied. He

knew that an interview with a third person present would be simply time thrown away since his message was intended for the Kaiser's own ears; and ultimately his persistence succeeded. The next Monday would be June 1st—a great day in Germany. It was the occasion of the Schrippenfest, a day which for many years had been set aside for the glorification of the German Army. On that festival, the Kaiser entertained with great pomp representative army officers and representative privates, as well as the diplomatic corps and other distinguished foreigners. Colonel House was invited to attend the Kaiser's luncheon on that occasion, and was informed that, after this function was over, he would have an opportunity of having a private conversation with His Majesty.

The affair took place in the palace at Potsdam. The militarism which Colonel House had felt so oppressively in Berlin society was especially manifest on this occasion. There were two luncheon parties—that of the Kaiser and his officers and guests in the state dining room, and that of the selected private soldiers outside. The Kaiser and the Kaiserin spent a few moments with their humbler subjects, drinking beer with them and passing a few comradely remarks; they then proceeded to the large dining hall and took their places with the gorgeously caparisoned and bemedalled chieftains of the German Army. The whole proceeding has an historic interest, in that it was the last Schrippenfest held. Whether another will ever be held is problematical, for the occasion was an inevitable part of the trappings of Hohenzollernism. Despite the gravity of the occasion, Colonel House's chief memory of this function is slightly tinged with the ludicrous. He had spent the better part of a lifetime attempting to rid himself of his military title, but uselessly. He was now embarrassed because these solemn German officers

persisted in regarding him as an important part of the American Army, and in discussing technical and strategical problems. The visitor made several attempts to explain that he was merely a "geographical colonel"—that the title was constantly conferred in an informal sense on Americans, especially Southerners, and that the handle to his name had, therefore, no military significance. But the round-faced Teutons stared at his explanation in blank amazement; they couldn't grasp the point at all, and continued to ask his opinion of matters purely military.

When the lunch was finished, the Kaiser took Colonel House aside, and the two men withdrew to the terrace, out of earshot of the rest of the gathering. However, they were not out of sight. For nearly half an hour the Kaiser and the American stood side by side upon the terrace, the German generals, at a respectful distance, watching the proceeding, resentful, puzzled, curious as to what it was all about. The quiet demeanour of the American "Colonel," his plain citizen's clothes, and his almost impassive face, formed a striking contrast to the Kaiser's dazzling uniform and the general scene of military display. Two or three of the generals and admirals present were in the secret, but only two or three; the mass of officers watching this meeting little guessed that the purpose of House's visit was to persuade the Kaiser to abandon everything for which the Schrippenfest stood; to enter an international compact with the United States and Great Britain for reducing armaments, to reach an agreement about trade and the treatment of backward peoples, and to form something of a permanent association for the preservation of peace. The one thing which was apparent to the watchers was that the American was only now and then saying a brief word, but that the Kaiser was, as usual,

doing a vast amount of talking. His speech rattled on with the utmost animation, his arms were constantly gesticulating, he would bring one fist down into his palm to register an emphatic point, and enforce certain ideas with a menacing forefinger. At times Colonel House would show slight signs of impatience and interrupt the flow of talk. But the Kaiser was clearly absorbed in the subject under discussion. His entourage several times attempted to break up the interview. The Court Chamberlain twice gingerly approached and informed His Majesty that the Imperial train was waiting to take the party back to Berlin. Each time the Kaiser, with an angry gesture, waved the interrupter away. Despairing of the usual resources, the Kaiserin was sent with the same message. The Kaiser did not treat her so summarily, but he paid no attention to the request, and continued to discuss the European situation with the American.

The subject that had mainly aroused the Imperial warmth was the "Yellow Peril." For years this had been an obsession with the Kaiser, and he launched into the subject as soon as Colonel House broached the purpose of his visit. There could be no question of disarmament, the Kaiser vehemently declared, as long as this danger to civilization existed. "We white nations should join hands," he said, "to oppose Japan and the other yellow nations, or some day they will destroy us."

It was with difficulty that Colonel House could get His Majesty away from this subject. Whatever topic he touched upon, the Kaiser would immediately start declaiming on the dangers that faced Europe from the East. His insistence on this accounted partly for the slight signs of impatience which the American showed. He feared that all the time allotted for the interview would be devoted to discussing the Japanese. About another

nation, the Kaiser showed almost as much alarm as he did about Japan, and that was Russia. He spoke contemptuously of France and Great Britain as possible enemies, for he apparently had no fear of them. But the size of Russia and the exposed eastern frontier of Germany seemed to appal him. How could Germany join a peace pact, and reduce its army, so long as 175,000,000 Slavs threatened them from this direction?

Another matter that the Kaiser discussed with decision was Mr. Bryan's arbitration treaty. Practically all the great nations had already ratified this treaty except Germany. The Kaiser now laughed at the treaties and pooh-poohed Bryan. Germany, he declared, would never accept such an arbitration plan. Colonel House had particular cause to remember this part of the conversation three years afterward, when the United States declared war on Germany. The outstanding feature of the Bryan treaty was the clause which pledged the high contracting parties not to go to war without taking a breathing spell of one year in which to think the matter over. Had Germany adopted this treaty, the United States, in April, 1917, after Germany had presented a *casus belli* by resuming unrestricted submarine warfare, could not have gone to war. We should have been obliged to wait a year, or until April, 1918, before engaging in hostilities. That is, an honourable observance of this Bryan treaty by the United States would have meant that Germany would have starved Great Britain into surrender, and crushed Europe with her army. Had the Kaiser, on this June afternoon, not notified Colonel House that Germany would not accept this treaty, but, instead, had notified him that he would accept it, William II might now be sitting on the throne of a victorious Germany, with Europe for a footstool.

Despite the Kaiser's hostile attitude toward these details, his general reception of the President's proposals was not outwardly unfriendly. Perhaps he was sincere, perhaps not; yet the fact is that he manifested more cordiality to this somewhat vague "get-together" proposal than had any of his official advisers. He encouraged Colonel House to visit London, talk the matter over with British statesmen, and then return to Berlin.

"The last thing," he said, "that Germany wants is war. We are getting to be a great commercial country. In a few years Germany will be a rich country, like England and the United States. We don't want a war to interfere with our progress."

Any peace suggestion that was compatible with German safety, he said, would be entertained. Yet his parting words were not reassuring.

"Every nation in Europe," he said, "has its bayonets pointed at Germany. But——"—and with this he gave a proud and smiling glance at the glistening representatives of his army gathered on this brilliant occasion—"we are ready!"

Colonel House left Berlin, not particularly hopeful; the Kaiser impressed him as a man of unstable nervous organization—as one who was just hovering on the borderland of insanity. Certainly, this was no man to be entrusted with such powers as the American had witnessed that day at Potsdam. Dangerous as the Kaiser was, however, he did not seem to Colonel House to be as great a menace to mankind as were his military advisers. The American came away from Berlin with the conviction that the most powerful force in Germany was the militaristic clique, and second, the Hohenzollern dynasty. He has always insisted that this represented the real precedence in power. So long as the Kaiser was obedient

to the will of militarism, so long could he maintain his standing. He was confident, however, that the militaristic oligarchy was determined to have its will, and would dethrone the Kaiser the moment he showed indications of taking a course that would lead to peace. Colonel House was also convinced that this militaristic oligarchy was determined on war. The coolness with which it listened to his proposals, the attempts it made to keep him from seeing the Kaiser alone, its repeated efforts to break up the conversation after it had begun, all pointed to the inevitable tragedy. The fact that the Kaiser expressed a wish to discuss the matter again, after Colonel House had sounded London, was the one hopeful feature of an otherwise discouraging experience, and accounts for the tone of faint optimism in his letters describing the visit.

From Edward M. House

Embassy of the United States of America,
Berlin,

May 28, 1914.

DEAR PAGE:

. . . I have done something here already—not much, but enough to open negotiations with London. I lunch with the Kaiser on Monday. I was advised to avoid Admiral von Tirpitz as being very unsympathetic. However, I went directly at him and had a most interesting talk. He is a forceful fellow. Von Jagow is pleasant but not forceful. I have had a long talk with him. The Chancellor's wife died last week so I have not got in touch with him. I will write you more fully from Paris. My address there will be Hotel Ritz.

Hastily,
E. M. H.

From Edward M. House

Hotel Ritz, 15, Place Vendôme, Paris.

June 3, 1914.

DEAR PAGE:

I had a satisfactory talk with the Kaiser on Monday. I have now seen everyone worthwhile in Germany except the Chancellor. I am ready now for London. Perhaps you had better prepare the way. The Kaiser knows I am to see them, and I have arranged to keep him in touch with results—if there are any. We must work quickly after I arrive, for it may be advisable for me to return to Germany, and I am counting on sailing for home July 15th or 28th. . . . I am eager to see you and tell you what I know.

Yours,

E. M. H.

Colonel House left that night for Paris, but there the situation was a hopeless one. France was not thinking of a foreign war; it was engrossed with its domestic troubles. There had been three French ministries in two weeks; and the trial of Madame Caillaux for the murder of Gaston Calmette, editor of the Paris *Figaro*, was monopolizing all the nation's capacity for emotion. Colonel House saw that it would be a waste of energy to take up his mission at Paris—there was no government stable enough to make a discussion worth while. He therefore immediately left for London.

The political situation in Great Britain was almost as confused as that in Paris. The country was in a state approaching civil war on the question of Home Rule for Ireland; the suffragettes were threatening to dynamite the Houses of Parliament; and the eternal struggle

between the Liberal and the Conservative elements was raging with unprecedented virulence. A European war was far from everybody's mind. It was this utter inability to grasp the realities of the European situation which proved the main impediment to Colonel House's work in England. He met all the important people—Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Edward Grey, and others. With them he discussed his "pact" proposal in great detail.

Naturally, ideas of this sort were listened to sympathetically by statesmen of the stamp of Asquith, Grey, and Lloyd George. The difficulty, however, was that none of these men apprehended an immediate war. They saw no necessity of hurrying about the matter. They had the utmost confidence in Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador in London, and Von Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Chancellor. Both these men were regarded by the Foreign Office as guarantees against a German attack; their continuance in their office was looked upon as an assurance that Germany entertained no immediately aggressive plans. Though the British statesmen did not say so definitely, the impression was conveyed that the mission on which Colonel House was engaged was an unnecessary one—a preparation against a danger that did not exist. Colonel House attempted to persuade Sir Edward Grey to visit the Kiel regatta, which was to take place in a few days, see the Kaiser, and discuss the plan with him. But the Government feared that such a visit would be very disturbing to France and Russia. Already Mr. Churchill's proposal for a "naval holiday" had so wrought up the French that a hurried trip to France by Mr. Asquith had been necessary to quiet them; the consternation that would have been caused in Paris by the presence of Sir Edward Grey at Kiel can only be

imagined. The fact that the British statesmen entertained so little apprehension of a German attack may possibly be a reflection on their judgment; yet Colonel House's visit has great historical value, for the experience afterward convinced him that Great Britain had had no part in bringing on the European war, and that Germany was solely responsible. It certainly should have put the Wilson Administration right on this all-important point, when the great storm broke.

The most vivid recollection which the British statesmen whom Colonel House met retain of his visit, was his consternation at the spirit that had confronted him everywhere in Germany. The four men most interested—Sir Edward Grey, Sir William Tyrrell, Mr. Page, and Colonel House—met at luncheon in the American Embassy a few days after President Wilson's emissary had returned from Berlin. Colonel House could talk of little except the preparations for war which were manifest on every hand.

"I feel as though I had been living near a mighty electric dynamo," Colonel House told his friends. "The whole of Germany is charged with electricity. Everybody's nerves are tense. It needs only a spark to set the whole thing off."

The "spark" came two weeks afterward with the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand.

"It is all a bad business," Colonel House wrote to Page when war broke out, "and just think how near we came to making such a catastrophe impossible! If England had moved a little faster and had let me go back to Germany, the thing, perhaps, could have been done."

To which Page at once replied:

“No, no, no—no power on earth could have prevented it. The German militarism, which is *the* crime of the last fifty years, has been working for this for twenty-five years. It is the logical result of their spirit and enterprise and doctrine. It *had* to come. But, of course, they chose the wrong time and the wrong issue. Militarism has no judgment. Don’t let your conscience be worried. You did all that any mortal man could do. But nobody could have done anything effective.

“We’ve got to see to it that this system doesn’t grow up again. That’s all.”

CHAPTER X

THE GRAND SMASH

IN THE latter part of July the Pages took a small house at Ockham, in Surrey, and here they spent the fateful week that preceded the outbreak of war. The Ambassador's emotions on this event are reflected in a memorandum written on Sunday, August 2nd—a day that was full of negotiations, ultimatums, and other precursors of the approaching struggle.

Bachelor's Farm, Ockham, Surrey.
Sunday, August 2, 1914.

The Grand Smash is come. Last night the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg handed the Russian Government a declaration of war. To-day the German Government asked the United States to take its diplomatic and consular business in Russia in hand. Herrick, our Ambassador in Paris, has already taken the German interests there.

It is reported in London to-day that the Germans have invaded Luxemburg and France.

Troops were marching through London at one o'clock this morning. Colonel Squier¹ came out to luncheon. He sees no way for England to keep out of it. There is no way. If she keep out, Germany will take Belgium and Holland, France would be betrayed, and England would be accused of forsaking her friends.

¹At this time American military attaché.

People came to the Embassy all day to-day (Sunday), to learn how they can get to the United States—a rather hard question to answer. I thought several times of going in, but Greene and Squier said there was no need of it. People merely hoped we might tell them what we can't tell them.

Returned travellers from Paris report indescribable confusion—people unable to obtain beds and fighting for seats in railway carriages.

It's been a hard day here. I have a lot (not a big lot either) of routine work on my desk which I meant to do. But it has been impossible to get my mind off this Great Smash. It holds one in spite of one's self. I revolve it and revolve it—of course getting nowhere.

It will revive our shipping. In a jiffy, under stress of a general European war, the United States Senate passed a bill permitting American registry to ships built abroad. Thus a real emergency knocked the old Protectionists out, who had held on for fifty years! Correspondingly the political parties here have agreed to suspend their Home Rule quarrel till this war is ended. Artificial structures fall when a real wind blows.

The United States is the only great Power wholly out of it. The United States, most likely, therefore, will be able to play a helpful and historic part at its end. It will give President Wilson, no doubt, a great opportunity. It will probably help us politically and it will surely help us economically.

The possible consequences stagger the imagination. Germany has staked everything on her ability to win primacy. England and France (to say nothing of Russia) really ought to give her a drubbing. If they do not, this side of the world will henceforth be German. If

they do flog Germany, Germany will for a long time be in discredit.

I walked out in the night a while ago. The stars are bright, the night is silent, the country quiet—as quiet as peace itself. Millions of men are in camp and on war-ships. Will they all have to fight and many of them die—to untangle this network of treaties and alliances and to blow off huge debts with gunpowder so that the world may start again?

A hurried picture of the events of the next seven days is given in the following letter to the President:

To the President

London, Sunday, August 9, 1914.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

God save us! What a week it has been! Last Sunday I was down here at the cottage I have taken for the summer—an hour out of London—uneasy because of the apparent danger and of what Sir Edward Grey had told me. During the day people began to go to the Embassy, but not in great numbers—merely to ask what they should do in case of war. The Secretary whom I had left in charge on Sunday telephoned me every few hours and laughingly told funny experiences with nervous women who came in and asked absurd questions. Of course, we all knew the grave danger that war might come but nobody could by the wildest imagination guess at what awaited us. On Monday I was at the Embassy earlier than I think I had ever been there before and every member of the staff was already on duty. Before breakfast time the place was filled—packed like sardines. This was two days before war was declared. There was

no chance to talk to individuals, such was the jam. I got on a chair and explained that I had already telegraphed to Washington—on Saturday—suggesting the sending of money and ships, and asking them to be patient. I made a speech to them several times during the day, and kept the Secretaries doing so at intervals. More than 2,000 Americans crowded into those offices (which are not large) that day. We were kept there till two o'clock in the morning. The Embassy has not been closed since.

Mr. Kent of the Bankers Trust Company in New York volunteered to form an American Citizens' Relief Committee. He and other men of experience and influence organized themselves at the Savoy Hotel. The hotel gave the use of nearly a whole floor. They organized themselves quickly and admirably and got information about steamships and currency, etc. We began to send callers at the Embassy to this Committee for such information. The banks were all closed for four days. These men got money enough—put it up themselves and used their English banking friends for help—to relieve all cases of actual want of cash that came to them. Tuesday the crowd at the Embassy was still great but smaller. The big space at the Savoy Hotel gave them room to talk to one another and to get relief for immediate needs. By that time I had accepted the volunteer services of five or six men to help us explain to the people—and they have all worked manfully day and night. We now have an orderly organization at four places: The Embassy, the Consul-General's Office, the Savoy, and the American Society in London, and everything is going well. Those two first days, there was, of course, great confusion. Crazy men and weeping women were imploring and cursing and demanding—God knows it was bedlam

turned loose. I have been called a man of the greatest genius for an emergency by some, by others a damned fool, by others every epithet between these extremes. Men shook English banknotes in my face and demanded United States money and swore our Government and its agents ought all to be shot. Women expected me to hand them steamship tickets home. When some found out that they could not get tickets on the transports (which they assumed would sail the next day) they accused me of favouritism. These absurd experiences will give you a hint of the panic. But now it has worked out all right, thanks to the Savoy Committee and other helpers.

Meantime, of course, our telegrams and mail increased almost as much as our callers. I have filled the place with stenographers, I have got the Savoy people to answer certain classes of letters, and we have caught up. My own time and the time of two of the secretaries has been almost wholly taken with governmental problems; hundreds of questions have come in from every quarter that were never asked before. But even with them we have now practically caught up—it has been a wonderful week!

Then the Austrian Ambassador came to give up his Embassy—to have me take over his business. Every detail was arranged. The next morning I called on him to assume charge and to say good-bye, when he told me that he was not yet going! That was a stroke of genius by Sir Edward Grey, who informed him that Austria had not given England cause for war. That *may* work out, or it may not. Pray Heaven it may! Poor Mensdorff, the Austrian Ambassador, does not know where he is. He is practically shut up in his guarded Embassy, weeping and waiting the decree of fate.

Then came the declaration of war, most dramatically.

Tuesday night, five minutes after the ultimatum had expired, the Admiralty telegraphed to the fleet "Go." In a few minutes the answer came back "Off." Soldiers began to march through the city going to the railway stations. An indescribable crowd so blocked the streets about the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Foreign Office, that at one o'clock in the morning I had to drive in my car by other streets to get home.

The next day the German Embassy was turned over to me. I went to see the German Ambassador at three o'clock in the afternoon. He came down in his pajamas, a crazy man. I feared he might literally go mad. He is of the anti-war party and he had done his best and utterly failed. This interview was one of the most pathetic experiences of my life. The poor man had not slept for several nights. Then came the crowds of frightened Germans, afraid that they would be arrested. They besieged the German Embassy and our Embassy. I put one of our naval officers in the German Embassy, put the United States seal on the door to protect it, and we began business there, too. Our naval officer has moved in—sleeps there. He has an assistant, a stenographer, a messenger: and I gave him the German automobile and chauffeur and two English servants that were left there. He has the job well in hand now, under my and Laughlin's supervision. But this has brought still another new lot of diplomatic and governmental problems—a lot of them. Three enormous German banks in London have, of course, been closed. Their managers pray for my aid. Howling women come and say their innocent German husbands have been arrested as spies. English, Germans, Americans—everybody has daughters and wives and invalid grandmothers alone in Germany. In God's name, they ask, what can I do for them? Here come

stacks of letters sent under the impression that I can send them to Germany. But the German business is already well in hand and I think that that will take little of my own time and will give little trouble. I shall send a report about it in detail to the Department the very first day I can find time to write it. In spite of the effort of the English Government to remain at peace with Austria, I fear I shall yet have the Austrian Embassy too. But I can attend to it.

Now, however, comes the financial job of wisely using the \$300,000 which I shall have to-morrow. I am using Mr. Chandler Anderson as counsel, of course. I have appointed a Committee—Skinner, the Consul-General, Lieut.-Commander McCrary of our Navy, Kent of the Bankers Trust Company, New York, and one other man yet to be chosen—to advise, after investigation, about every proposed expenditure. Anderson has been at work all day to-day drawing up proper forms, etc., to fit the Department's very excellent instructions. I have the feeling that more of that money may be wisely spent in helping to get people off the continent (except in France, where they seem admirably to be managing it, under Herrick) than is immediately needed in England. All this merely to show you the diversity and multiplicity of the job.

I am having a card catalogue, each containing a sort of who's who, of all Americans in Europe of whom we hear. This will be ready by the time the *Tennessee*¹ comes. Fifty or more stranded Americans—men and women—are doing this work free.

I have a member of Congress² in the general reception

¹The American Government, on the outbreak of war, sent the U. S. S. *Tennessee* to Europe, with large supplies of gold for the relief of stranded Americans.

²The late Augustus P. Gardner, of Massachusetts.

room of the Embassy answering people's questions—three other volunteers as well.

We had a world of confusion for two or three days. But all this work is now well organized and it can be continued without confusion or cross purposes. I meet committees and lay plans and read and write telegrams from the time I wake till I go to bed. But, since it is now all in order, it is easy. Of course I am running up the expenses of the Embassy—there is no help for that; but the bill will be really exceedingly small because of the volunteer work—for awhile. I have not and shall not consider the expense of whatever it seems absolutely necessary to do—of other things I shall always consider the expense most critically. Everybody is working with everybody else in the finest possible spirit. I have made out a sort of military order to the Embassy staff, detailing one man with clerks for each night and forbidding the others to stay there till midnight. None of us slept more than a few hours last week. It was not the work that kept them after the first night or two, but the sheer excitement of this awful cataclysm. All London has been awake for a week. Soldiers are marching day and night; immense throngs block the streets about the government offices. But they are all very orderly. Every day Germans are arrested on suspicion; and several of them have committed suicide. Yesterday one poor American woman yielded to the excitement and cut her throat. I find it hard to get about much. People stop me on the street, follow me to luncheon, grab me as I come out of any committee meeting—to know my opinion of this or that—how can they get home? Will such-and-such a boat fly the American flag? Why did I take the German Embassy? I have to fight my way about and rush to an automobile. I have had to buy me a second one to keep

up the racket. Buy?—no—only bargain for it, for I have not any money. But everybody is considerate, and that makes no matter for the moment. This little cottage in an out-of-the-way place, twenty-five miles from London, where I am trying to write and sleep, has been found by people to-day, who come in automobiles to know how they may reach their sick kinspeople in Germany. I have not had a bath for three days: as soon as I got in the tub, the telephone rang an “urgent” call!

Upon my word, if one could forget the awful tragedy, all this experience would be worth a lifetime of commonplace. One surprise follows another so rapidly that one loses all sense of time: it seems an age since last Sunday.

I shall never forget Sir Edward Grey’s telling me of the ultimatum—while he wept; nor the poor German Ambassador who has lost in his high game—almost a demented man; nor the King as he declaimed at me for half-an-hour and threw up his hands and said, “My God, Mr. Page, what else could we do?” Nor the Austrian Ambassador’s wringing his hands and weeping and crying out, “My dear Colleague, my dear Colleague.”

Along with all this tragedy come two reverend American peace delegates who got out of Germany by the skin of their teeth and complain that they lost all the clothes they had except what they had on. “Don’t complain,” said I, “but thank God you saved your skins.” Everybody has forgotten what war means—forgotten that folks get hurt. But they are coming around to it now. A United States Senator telegraphs me: “Send my wife and daughter home on the first ship.” Ladies and gentlemen filled the steerage of that ship—not a bunk left; and his wife and daughter are found three days later sitting in a swell hotel waiting for

me to bring them stateroom tickets on a silver tray! One of my young fellows in the Embassy rushes into my office saying that a man from Boston, with letters of introduction from Senators and Governors and Secretaries, et al., was demanding tickets of admission to a picture gallery, and a secretary to escort him there.

"What shall I do with him?"

"Put his proposal to a vote of the 200 Americans in the room and see them draw and quarter him."

I have not yet heard what happened. A woman writes me four pages to prove how dearly she loves my sister and invites me to her hotel—five miles away—"please to tell her about the sailing of the steamships." Six American preachers pass a resolution unanimously "urging our Ambassador to telegraph our beloved, peace-loving President to stop this awful war"; and they come with simple solemnity to present their resolution. Lord save us, what a world!

And this awful tragedy moves on to—what? We do not know what is really happening, so strict is the censorship. But it seems inevitable to me that Germany will be beaten, that the horrid period of alliances and armaments will not come again, that England will gain even more of the earth's surface, that Russia may next play the menace; that all Europe (as much as survives) will be bankrupt; that relatively we shall be immensely stronger financially and politically—there must surely come many great changes—very many, yet undreamed of. Be ready; for you will be called on to compose this huge quarrel. I thank Heaven for many things—first, the Atlantic Ocean; second, that you refrained from war in Mexico; third, that we kept our treaty—the canal tolls victory, I mean. Now, when all this half of the world will suffer the unspeakable brutalization of war,

we shall preserve our moral strength, our political powers, and our ideals.

God save us!

W. H. P.

Vivid as is the above letter, it lacks several impressive details. Probably the one event that afterward stood out most conspicuously in Page's mind was his interview with Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary. Sir Edward asked the American Ambassador to call Tuesday afternoon; his purpose was to inform him that Great Britain had sent an ultimatum to Germany. By this time Page and the Foreign Secretary had established not only cordial official relations but a warm friendship. The two men had many things in common; they had the same general outlook on world affairs, the same ideas of justice and fair dealing, the same belief that other motives than greed and aggrandizement should control the attitude of one nation to another. The political tendencies of both men were idealistic; both placed character above everything else as the first requisite of a statesman; both hated war, and looked forward to the time when more rational methods of conducting international relations would prevail. Moreover, their purely personal qualities had drawn Sir Edward and Page closely together. A common love of nature and of out-of-door life had made them akin; both loved trees, birds, flowers, and hedgerows; the same intellectual diversions and similar tastes in reading had strengthened the tie. "I could never mention a book I liked that Mr. Page had not read and liked too," Sir Edward Grey once remarked to the present writer, and the enthusiasm that both men felt for Wordsworth's poetry in itself formed a strong bond of union. The part that the American Ambassador had

played in the repeal of the Panama discrimination had also made a great impression upon this British statesman—a man to whom honour means more in international dealings than any other consideration. “Mr. Page is one of the finest illustrations I have ever known,” Grey once said, “of the value of character in a public man.” In their intercourse for the past year the two men had grown accustomed to disregard all pretense of diplomatic technique; their discussions had been straightforward man-to-man talks; there had been nothing suggestive of pose or finesse, and no attempts at cleverness—merely an effort to get to the bottom of things and to discover a common meeting ground. The Ambassador, moreover, represented a nation for which the Foreign Secretary had always entertained the highest respect and even affection, and he and Page could find no happier common meeting-ground than an effort to bring about the closest coöperation between the two countries. Sir Edward, far-seeing statesman that he was, had already appreciated, even amid the exciting and engrossing experiences through which he was then passing, the critical and almost determining part which the United States was destined to play in the war, and he had now sent for the American Ambassador because he believed that the President was entitled to a complete explanation of the momentous decision which Great Britain had just made.

The meeting took place at three o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, August 4th—a fateful date in modern history. The time represented the interval which elapsed between the transmission of the British ultimatum to Germany and the hour set for the German reply. The place was that same historic room in the Foreign Office where so many interviews had already taken place and where so many were to take place in the next four years. As

Page came in, Sir Edward, a tall and worn and rather pallid figure, was standing against the mantelpiece; he greeted the Ambassador with a grave handshake and the two men sat down. Overwrought the Foreign Secretary may have been, after the racking week which had just passed, but there was nothing flurried or excited in his manner; his whole bearing was calm and dignified, his speech was quiet and restrained, he uttered not one bitter word against Germany, but his measured accents had a sureness, a conviction of the justice of his course, that went home in almost deadly fashion. He sat in a characteristic pose, his elbows resting on the sides of his chair, his hands folded and placed beneath his chin, the whole body leaning forward eagerly and his eyes searching those of his American friend. The British Foreign Secretary was a handsome and an inspiring figure. He was a man of large, but of well knit, robust, and slender frame, wiry and even athletic; he had a large head, surmounted with dark brown hair, slightly touched with gray; a finely cut, somewhat rugged and bronzed face, suggestive of that out-of-door life in which he had always found his greatest pleasure; light blue eyes that shone with straightforwardness and that on this occasion were somewhat pensive with anxiety; thin, ascetic lips that could smile in the most confidential manner or close tightly with grimness and fixed purpose. He was a man who was at the same time shy and determined, elusive and definite, but if there was one note in his bearing that predominated all others, it was a solemn and quiet sincerity. He seemed utterly without guile and magnificently simple.

Sir Edward at once referred to the German invasion of Belgium.

"The neutrality of Belgium," he said, and there was

the touch of finality in his voice, "is assured by treaty. Germany is a signatory power to that treaty. It is upon such solemn compacts as this that civilization rests. If we give them up, or permit them to be violated, what becomes of civilization? Ordered society differs from mere force only by such solemn agreements or compacts. But Germany has violated the neutrality of Belgium. That means bad faith. It means also the end of Belgium's independence. And it will not end with Belgium. Next will come Holland, and, after Holland, Denmark. This very morning the Swedish Minister informed me that Germany had made overtures to Sweden to come in on Germany's side. The whole plan is thus clear. This one great military power means to annex Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian states and to subjugate France."

Sir Edward energetically rose; he again stood near the mantelpiece, his figure straightened, his eyes were fairly flashing—it was a picture, Page once told me, that was afterward indelibly fixed in his mind.

"England would be forever contemptible," Sir Edward said, "if it should sit by and see this treaty violated. Its position would be gone if Germany were thus permitted to dominate Europe. I have therefore asked you to come to tell you that this morning we sent an ultimatum to Germany. We have told Germany that, if this assault on Belgium's neutrality is not reversed, England will declare war."

"Do you expect Germany to accept it?" asked the Ambassador.

Sir Edward shook his head.

"No. Of course everybody knows that there will be war."

There was a moment's pause and then the Foreign Secretary spoke again:

"Yet we must remember that there are two Germanys. There is the Germany of men like ourselves—of men like Lichnowsky and Jagow. Then there is the Germany of men of the war party. The war party has got the upper hand."

At this point Sir Edward's eyes filled with tears.

"Thus the efforts of a lifetime go for nothing. I feel like a man who has wasted his life."

"This scene was most affecting," Page said afterward. "Sir Edward not only realized what the whole thing meant, but he showed that he realized the awful responsibility for it."

Sir Edward then asked the Ambassador to explain the situation to President Wilson; he expressed the hope that the United States would take an attitude of neutrality and that Great Britain might look for "the courtesies of neutrality" from this country. Page tried to tell him of the sincere pain that such a war would cause the President and the American people.

"I came away," the Ambassador afterward said, "with a sort of stunned sense of the impending ruin of half the world."¹

The significant fact in this interview is that the British Foreign Secretary justified the attitude of his country exclusively on the ground of the violation of a treaty. This is something that is not yet completely understood in the United States. The participation of Great Britain in this great continental struggle is usually regarded as having been inevitable, irrespective of the German invasion of Belgium; yet the fact is that, had Germany not invaded Belgium, Great Britain would not have declared war, at least at this critical time. Sir Edward

¹The materials on which this account is based are a memorandum of the interview made by Sir Edward Grey, now in the archives of the British Foreign Office, a similar memorandum made by Page, and a detailed description given verbally by Page to the writer.

came to Page after a week's experience with a wavering cabinet. Upon the general question of Britain's participation in a European war the Asquith Ministry had been by no means unanimous. Probably Mr. Asquith himself and Mr. Lloyd George would have voted against taking such a step. It is quite unlikely that the cabinet could have carried a majority of the House of Commons on this issue. But the violation of the Belgian treaty changed the situation in a twinkling. The House of Commons at once took its stand in favour of intervention. All members of the cabinet, excepting John Morley and John Burns, who resigned, immediately aligned themselves on the side of war. In the minds of British statesmen the violation of this treaty gave Britain no choice. Germany thus forced Great Britain into the war, just as, two and a half years afterward, the Prussian war lords compelled the United States to take up arms. Sir Edward Grey's interview with the American Ambassador thus had great historic importance, for it makes this point clear. The two men had recently had many discussions on another subject in which the violation of a treaty was the great consideration—that of Panama tolls—and there was a certain appropriateness in this explanation of the British Foreign Secretary that precisely the same point had determined Great Britain's participation in the greatest struggle that has ever devastated Europe.

Inevitably the question of American mediation had come to the surface in this trying time. Several days before Page's interview with Grey, the American Ambassador, acting in response to a cablegram from Washington, had asked if the good offices of the United States could be used in any way. "Sir Edward is very appreciative of our mood and willingness," Page wrote in reference to this visit. "But they don't want peace on

the continent—the ruling classes do not. But they will want it presently and then our opportunity will come. Ours is the only great government in the world that is not in some way entangled. Of course I'll keep in daily touch with Sir Edward and with everybody who can and will keep me informed."

This was written about July 27th; at that time Austria had sent her ultimatum to Serbia but there was no certainty that Europe would become involved in war. A demand for American mediation soon became widespread in the United States; the Senate passed a resolution requesting the President to proffer his good offices to that end. On this subject the following communications were exchanged between President Wilson and his chief adviser, then sojourning at his summer home in Massachusetts. Like Mr. Tumulty, the President's Secretary, Colonel House usually addressed the President in terms reminiscent of the days when Mr. Wilson was Governor of New Jersey. Especially interesting also are Colonel House's references to his own trip to Berlin and the joint efforts made by the President and himself in the preceding June to forestall the war which had now broken out.

Edward M. House to the President

Pride's Crossing (Mass.),
August 3, 1914. [Monday.]

THE PRESIDENT,

The White House, Washington, D. C.

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Our people are deeply shocked at the enormity of this general European war, and I see here and there regret that you did not use your good offices in behalf of peace.

If this grows into criticism so as to become noticeable I believe everyone would be pleased and proud that you

had anticipated this world-wide horror and had done all that was humanly possible to avert it.

The more terrible the war becomes, the greater credit it will be that you saw the trend of events long before it was seen by other statesmen of the world.

Your very faithful,

E. M. HOUSE.

P. S. The question might be asked why negotiations were only with Germany and England and not with France and Russia. This, of course, was because it was thought that Germany would act for the Triple Alliance and England for the Triple Entente.¹

The President to Edward M. House

The White House,
Washington, D. C.

August 4th, 1914. [Tuesday.]

EDWARD M. HOUSE,

Pride's Crossing, Mass.

Letter of third received. Do you think I could and should act now and if so how?

WOODROW WILSON.

Edward M. House to the President

[Telegram]

Pride's Crossing, Mass.

August 5th, 1914. [Wednesday.]

THE PRESIDENT,

The White House, Washington, D. C.

Olney² and I agree that in response to the Senate reso-

¹Colonel House, of course, is again referring to his experience in Berlin and London, described in the preceding chapter.

²Richard Olney, Secretary of State in the Cabinet of President Cleveland, who was a neighbour of Colonel House at his summer home, and with whom the latter apparently consulted.

lution it would be unwise to tender your good offices at this time. We believe it would lessen your influence when the proper moment arrives. He thinks it advisable that you make a direct or indirect statement to the effect that you have done what was humanly possible to compose the situation before this crisis had been reached. He thinks this would satisfy the Senate and the public in view of your disinclination to act now upon the Senate resolution. The story might be told to the correspondents at Washington and they might use the expression "we have it from high authority."

He agrees to my suggestion that nothing further should be done now than to instruct our different ambassadors to inform the respective governments to whom they are accredited, that you stand ready to tender your good offices whenever such an offer is desired.

Olney agrees with me that the shipping bill¹ is full of lurking dangers.

E. M. HOUSE.

For some reason, however, the suggested statement was not made. The fact that Colonel House had visited London, Paris, and Berlin six weeks before the outbreak of war, in an effort to bring about a plan for disarmament, was not permitted to reach the public ear. Probably the real reason why this fact was concealed was that its publication at that time would have reflected so seriously upon Germany that it would have been regarded as "un-neutral." Colonel House, as already described, had found Germany in a most belligerent frame of mind, its army "ready," to use the Kaiser's own word, for an immediate spring at France; on the other hand he had

¹This is the bill passed soon after the outbreak of war admitting foreign built ships to American registry. Subsequent events showed that it was "full of lurking dangers."

found Great Britain in a most pacific frame of mind, entirely unsuspecting of Germany, and confident that the European situation was daily improving. It is interesting now to speculate on the public sensation that would have been caused had Colonel House's account of his visit to Berlin been published at that exciting time.

Page's telegrams and letters show that any suggestion at mediation would have been a waste of effort. The President seriously forebore, but the desire to mediate was constantly in his mind for the next few months, and he now interested himself in laying the foundations of future action. Page was instructed to ask for an audience with King George and to present the following document:

*From the President of the United States
to His Majesty the King*

SIR:

As official head of one of the Powers signatory to the Hague Convention, I feel it to be my privilege and my duty under Article 3 of that Convention to say to your Majesty, in a spirit of most earnest friendship, that I should welcome an opportunity to act in the interest of European peace either now or at any time that might be thought more suitable as an occasion, to serve your Majesty and all concerned in a way that would afford me lasting cause for gratitude and happiness.

WOODROW WILSON.

This, of course, was not mediation, but a mere expression of the President's willingness to mediate at any time that such a tender from him, in the opinion of the warring Powers, would serve the cause of peace. Identically the same message was sent to the American Am-

bassadors at the capitals of all the belligerent Powers for presentation to the heads of state. Page's letter of August 9th, printed above, refers to the earnestness and cordiality with which King George received him and to the freedom with which His Majesty discussed the situation.

In this exciting week Page was thrown into intimate contact with the two most pathetic figures in the diplomatic circle of London—the Austrian and the German Ambassadors. To both of these men the war was more than a great personal sorrow: it was a tragedy. Mensdorff, the Austrian Ambassador, had long enjoyed an intimacy with the British royal family. Indeed he was a distant relative of King George, for he was a member of the family of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, a fact which was emphasized by his physical resemblance to Prince Albert, the consort of Queen Victoria. Mensdorff was not a robust man, physically or mentally, and he showed his consternation at the impending war in most unrestrained and even unmanly fashion. As his government directed him to turn the Austrian Embassy over to the American Ambassador, it was necessary for Page to call and arrange the details. The interview, as Page's letter indicates, was little less than a paroxysm of grief on the Austrian's part. He denounced Germany and the Kaiser; he paraded up and down the room wringing his hands; he could be pacified only by suggestions from the American that perhaps something might happen to keep Austria out of the war. The whole atmosphere of the Austrian Embassy radiated this same feeling. "Austria has no quarrel with England," remarked one of Mensdorff's assistants to one of the ladies of the American Embassy; and this sentiment was the general one in Austrian diplomatic circles. The disinclination of both Great Britain and

Austria to war was so great that, as Page relates, for several days there was no official declaration.

Even more tragical than the fate of the Austrian Ambassador was that of his colleague, the representative of the German Emperor. It was more tragical because Prince Lichnowsky represented the power that was primarily responsible, and because he had himself been an unwilling tool in bringing on the cataclysm. It was more profound because Lichnowsky was a man of deeper feeling and greater moral purpose than his Austrian colleague, and because for two years he had been devoting his strongest energies to preventing the very calamity which had now become a fact. As the war went on Lichnowsky gradually emerged as one of its finest figures; the pamphlet which he wrote, at a time when Germany's military fortunes were still high, boldly placing the responsibility upon his own country and his own Kaiser, was one of the bravest acts which history records. Through all his brief Ambassadorship Lichnowsky had shown these same friendly traits. The mere fact that he had been selected as Ambassador at this time was little less than a personal calamity. His appointment gives a fair measure of the depths of duplicity to which the Prussian system could descend. For more than fourteen years Lichnowsky had led the quiet life of a Polish country gentleman; he had never enjoyed the favour of the Kaiser; in his own mind and in that of his friends his career had long since been finished; yet from this retirement he had been suddenly called upon to represent the Fatherland at the greatest of European capitals. The motive for this elevation, which was unfathomable then, is evident enough now. Prince Lichnowsky was known to be an Anglophile; everything English—English literature, English country life, English public men—had for

him an irresistible charm; and his greatest ambition as a diplomat had been to maintain the most cordial relations between his own country and Great Britain. This was precisely the type of Ambassador that fitted into the Imperial purpose at that crisis. Germany was preparing energetically but quietly for war; it was highly essential that its most formidable potential foe, Great Britain, should be deceived as to the Imperial plans and lulled into a sense of security. The diabolical character of Prince Lichnowsky's selection for this purpose was that, though his mission was one of deception, he was not himself a party to it and did not realize until it was too late that he had been used merely as a tool. Prince Lichnowsky was not called upon to assume a mask; all that was necessary was that he should simply be himself. And he acquitted himself with great success. He soon became a favourite in London society; the Foreign Office found him always ready to coöperate in any plan that tended to improve relations between the two countries. It will be remembered that, when Colonel House returned to London from his interview with the Kaiser in June, 1914, he found British statesmen incredulous about any trouble with Germany. This attitude was the consequence of Lichnowsky's work. The fact is that relations between the two countries had not been so harmonious in twenty years. All causes of possible friction had been adjusted. The treaty regulating the future of the Bagdad Railroad, the only problem that clouded the future, had been initialled by both the British and the German Foreign Offices and was about to be signed at the moment when the ultimatums began to fly through the air. Prince Lichnowsky was thus entitled to look upon his ambassadorship as one of the most successful in modern history, for it had removed all possible cause of war.

And then suddenly came the stunning blow. For several days Lichnowsky's behaviour was that of an irresponsible person. Those who came into contact with him found his mind wandering and incoherent. Page describes the German Ambassador as coming down and receiving him in his pajamas; he was not the only one who had that experience, for members of the British Foreign Office transacted business with this most punctilious of diplomats in a similar condition of personal disarray. And the dishabille extended to his mental operations as well.

But Lichnowsky's and Mensdorff's behaviour merely portrayed the general atmosphere that prevailed in London during that week. This atmosphere was simply hysterical. Among all the intimate participants, however, there was one man who kept his poise and who saw things clearly. That was the American Ambassador. It was certainly a strange trick which fortune had played upon Page. He had come to London with no experience in diplomacy. Though the possibility of such an outbreak as this war had been in every man's consciousness for a generation, it had always been as something certain yet remote; most men thought of it as most men think of death—as a fatality which is inevitable, but which is so distant that it never becomes a reality. Thus Page, when he arrived in London, did not have the faintest idea of the experience that awaited him. Most people would have thought that his quiet and studious and unworldly life had hardly prepared him to become the representative of the most powerful neutral power at the world's capital during the greatest crisis of modern history. To what an extent that impression was justified the happenings of the next four years will disclose; it is enough to point out in this place that in one

respect at least the war found the American Ambassador well prepared. From the instant hostilities began his mind seized the significance of it all. "Mr. Page had one fine qualification for his post," a great British statesman once remarked to the present writer. "From the beginning he saw that there was a right and a wrong to the matter. He did not believe that Great Britain and Germany were equally to blame. He believed that Great Britain was right and that Germany was wrong. I regard it as one of the greatest blessings of modern times that the United States had an ambassador in London in August, 1914, who had grasped this overwhelming fact. It seems almost like a dispensation of Providence."

It is important to insist on this point now, for it explains Page's entire course as Ambassador. The confidential telegram which Page sent directly to President Wilson in early September, 1914, furnishes the standpoint from which his career as war Ambassador can be understood:

Confidential to the President

September 11, 3 A. M.

No. 645.

Accounts of atrocities are so inevitably a part of every war that for some time I did not believe the unbelievable reports that were sent from Europe, and there are many that I find incredible even now. But American and other neutral observers who have seen these things in France and especially in Belgium now convince me that the Germans have perpetrated some of the most barbarous deeds in history. Apparently credible persons relate such things without end.

Those who have violated the Belgian treaty, those who have sown torpedoes in the open sea, those who have

dropped bombs on Antwerp and Paris indiscriminately with the idea of killing whom they may strike, have taken to heart Bernhardi's doctrine that war is a glorious occupation. Can any one longer disbelieve the completely barbarous behaviour of the Prussians?

PAGE.

CHAPTER XI

ENGLAND UNDER THE STRESS OF WAR

THE months following the outbreak of the war were busy ones for the American Embassy in London. The Embassies of all the great Powers with which Great Britain was contending were handed over to Page, and the citizens of these countries—Germany, Austria, Turkey—who found themselves stranded in England, were practically made his wards. It is a constant astonishment to his biographer that, during all the labour and distractions of this period, Page should have found time to write long letters describing the disturbing scene. There are scores of them, all penned in the beautiful copper-plate handwriting that shows no signs of excitement or weariness, but is in itself an evidence of mental poise and of the sure grip which Page had upon the evolving drama. From the many sent in these autumn and early winter months the following selections are made:

To Edward M. House

September 22nd, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

When the day of settlement comes, the settlement must make sure that the day of militarism is done and can come no more. If sheer brute force is to rule the world, it will not be worth living in. If German bureaucratic brute force could conquer Europe, presently it would try to conquer the United States; and we should

all go back to the era of war as man's chief industry and back to the domination of kings by divine right. It seems to me, therefore, that the Hohenzollern idea must perish—be utterly strangled in the making of peace.

Just how to do this, it is not yet easy to say. If the German defeat be emphatic enough and dramatic enough, the question may answer itself—how's the best way to be rid of the danger of the recurrence of a military bureaucracy? But in any event, this thing must be killed forever—somehow. I think that a firm insistence on this is the main task that mediation will bring. The rest will be corollaries of this.

The danger, of course, as all the world is beginning to fear, is that the Kaiser, after a local victory—especially if he should yet take Paris—will propose peace, saying that he dreads the very sight of blood—propose peace in time, as he will hope, to save his throne, his dynasty, his system. That will be a dangerous day. The horror of war will have a tendency to make many persons in the countries of the Allies accept it. All the peace folk in the world will say "Accept it!" But if he and his throne and his dynasty and his system be saved, in twenty-five years the whole job must be done over again.

We are settling down to a routine of double work and to an oppression of gloom. Dead men, dead men, maimed men, the dull gray dread of what may happen next, the impossibility of changing the subject, the monotony of gloom, the consequent dimness of ideals, the overworking of the emotions and the heavy bondage of thought—the days go swiftly: that's one blessing.

The diplomatic work proper brings fewer difficulties than you would guess. New subjects and new duties come with great rapidity, but they soon fall into formulas—at least into classes. We shall have no sharp crises nor

grave difficulties so long as our Government and this Government keep their more than friendly relations. I see Sir Edward Grey almost every day. We talk of many things—all phases of one vast wreck; and all the clear-cut points that come up I report by telegraph. To-day the talk was of American cargoes in British ships and the machinery they have set up here for fair settlement. Then of Americans applying for enlistment in Canadian regiments. "If sheer brute force conquer Europe," said he, "the United States will be the only country where life will be worth living; and in time you will have to fight against it, too, if it conquer Europe." He spoke of the letter he had just received from the President, and he asked me many sympathetic questions about you also and about your health. I ventured to express some solicitude for him.

"How much do you get out now?"

"Only for an automobile drive Sunday afternoon."

This from a man who is never happy away from nature and is at home only in the woods and along the streams. He looks worn.

I hear nothing but satisfaction with our neutrality tight-rope walk. I think we are keeping it here, by close attention to our work and by silence.

Our volunteer and temporary aids are doing well—especially the army and navy officers. We now occupy three work-places: (1) the over-crowded embassy; (2) a suite of offices around the corner where the ever-lengthening list of inquiries for persons is handled and where an army officer pays money to persons whose friends have deposited it for them with the Government in Washington—just now at the rate of about \$15,000 a day; and (3) two great rooms at the Savoy Hotel, where the admirable relief committee (which meets all trains that bring

people from the continent) gives aid to the needy and helps people to get tickets home. They have this week helped about 400 with more or less money—after full investigation.

At the Embassy a secretary remains till bed-time, which generally means till midnight; and I go back there for an hour or two every night.

The financial help we give to German and Austrian subjects (poor devils) is given, of course, at their embassies, where we have men—our men—in charge. Each of these governments accepted my offer to give our Ambassadors (Gerard and Penfield) a sum of money to help Americans if I would set aside an equal sum to help their people here. The German fund that I thus began with was \$50,000; the Austrian, \$25,000. All this and more will be needed before the war ends.—All this activity is kept up with scrupulous attention to the British rules and regulations. In fact, we are helping this Government much in the management of these “alien enemies,” as they call them.

I am amazed at the good health we all keep with this big volume of work and the long hours. Not a man nor a woman has been ill a day. I have known something about work and the spirit of good work in other organizations of various sorts; but I never saw one work in better spirit than this. And remember, most of them are volunteers.

The soldiers here complained for weeks in private about the lethargy of the people—the slowness of men to enlist. But they seemed to me to complain with insufficient reason. For now they come by thousands. They do need more men in the field, and they may conscript them, but I doubt the necessity. But I run across such incidents as these: I met the Dowager Countess of D— yesterday—a woman of 65, as tall as I and as erect herself as a

soldier, who might be taken for a woman of 40, prematurely gray. "I had five sons in the Boer War. I have three in this war. I do not know where any one of them is." Mrs. Page's maid is talking of leaving her. "My two brothers have gone to the war and perhaps I ought to help their wives and children." The Countess and the maid are of the same blood, each alike unconquerable. My chauffeur has talked all day about the naval battle in which five German ships were lately sunk.¹ He reminded me of the night two months ago when he drove Mrs. Page and me to dine with Sir John and Lady Jellicoe—Jellicoe now, you know, being in command of the British fleet.

This Kingdom has settled down to war as its one great piece of business now in hand, and it is impossible, as the busy, burdensome days pass, to pick out events or impressions that one can be sure are worth writing. For instance a soldier—a man in the War Office—told me to-day that Lord Kitchener had just told him that the war may last for several years. That, I confess, seems to me very improbable, and (what is of more importance) it is not the notion held by most men whose judgment I respect. But all the military men say it will be long. It would take several years to kill that vast horde of Germans, but it will not take so long to starve them out. Food here is practically as cheap as it was three months ago and the sea routes are all open to England and practically all closed to Germany. The ultimate result, of course, will be Germany's defeat. But the British are now going about the business of war as if they knew they would continue it indefinitely. The grim efficiency of their work even in small details was illustrated to-day by the Government's informing us that a German handy man, whom the German Ambassador left at his Embassy, with the English Govern-

¹Evidently the battle of Heligoland Bight of August 28, 1914.

ment's consent, is a spy—that he sends verbal messages to Germany by women who are permitted to go home, and that they have found letters written by him sewed in some of these women's undergarments! This man has been at work there every day under the two very good men whom I have put in charge there and who have never suspected him. How on earth they found this out simply passes my understanding. Fortunately it doesn't bring any embarrassment to us; he was not in our pay and he was left by the German Ambassador with the British Government's consent, to take care of the house. Again, when the German Chancellor made a statement two days ago about the causes of the war, in a few hours Sir Edward Grey issued a statement showing that the Chancellor had misstated every important historic fact.—The other day a commercial telegram was sent (or started) by Mr. Bryan for some bank or trading concern in the United States, managed by Germans, to some correspondent of theirs in Germany. It contained the words, "Where is Harry?" The censor here stopped it. It was brought to me with the explanation that "Harry" is one of the most notorious of German spies—whom they would like to catch. The English were slow in getting into full action, but now they never miss a trick, little or big.

The Germans have far more than their match in resources and in shrewdness and—in character. As the bloody drama unfolds itself, the hollow pretence and essential barbarity of Prussian militarism become plainer and plainer: there is no doubt of that. And so does the invincibility of this race. A well-known Englishman told me to-day that his three sons, his son-in-law, and half his office men are in the military service, "where they belong in a time like this." The lady who once so sharply criticized this gentleman to Mrs. Page has a son and a brother

in the army in France. It makes you take a fresh grip on your eyelids to hear either of these talk. In fact the strain on one's emotions, day in and day out, makes one wonder if the world is real—or is this a vast dream? From sheer emotional exhaustion I slept almost all day last Sunday, though I had not for several days lost sleep at all. Many persons tell me of their similar experiences. The universe seems muffled. There is a ghostly silence in London (so it seems); and only dim street lights are lighted at night. No experience seems normal. A vast organization is working day and night down town receiving Belgian refugees. They become the guests of the English. They are assigned to people's homes, to boarding houses, to institutions. They are taking care of them—this government and this people are. I do not recall when one nation ever did another whole nation just such a hospitable service as this. You can't see that work going on and remain unmoved. An old woman who has an income of \$15 a week decided that she could live on \$7.50. She buys milk with the other \$7.50 and goes to meet every train at one of the big stations with a basket filled with baby bottles, and she gives milk to every hungry-looking baby she sees. Our American committeeman, Hoover, saw her in trouble the other day and asked her what was the matter. She explained that the police would no longer admit her to the platform because she didn't belong to any relief committee. He took her to headquarters and said: "Do you see this good old lady? She puts you and me and everybody else to shame—do you understand?" The old lady now gets to the platform. Hoover himself gave \$5,000 for helping stranded Americans and he goes to the trains to meet them, while the war has stopped his big business and his big income. This is a sample of the noble American end of the story.

These are the saving class of people to whom life becomes a bore unless they can help somebody. There's just such a fellow in Brussels—you may have heard of him, for his name is Whitlock. Stories of his showing himself a man come out of that closed-up city every week. To a really big man, it doesn't matter whether his post is a little post, or a big post but, if I were President, I'd give Whitlock a big post. There's another fellow somewhere in Germany—a consul—of whom I never heard till the other day. But people have taken to coming in my office—English ladies—who wish to thank “you and your great government” for the courage and courtesy of this consul.¹ Stories about him will follow. Herrick, too, in Paris, somehow causes Americans and English and even Guatemalans who come along to go out of their way to say what he has done for them. Now there is a quality in the old woman with the baby bottles, and in the consul and in Whitlock and Hoover and Herrick and this English nation which adopts the Belgians—a quality that is invincible. When folk like these come down the road, I respectfully do obeisance to them. And—it's this kind of folk that the Germans have run up against. I thank Heaven I'm of their race and blood.

The whole world is bound to be changed as a result of this war. If Germany should win, our Monroe Doctrine would at once be shot in two, and we should have to get “out of the sun.” The military party is a party of conquest—absolutely. If England wins, as of course she will, it'll be a bigger and a stronger England, with no strong enemy in the world, with her Empire knit closer than ever—India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Egypt; under obligations to and in alliance with

¹The reference in all probability is to Mr. Charles L. Hoover, at that time American Consul at Carlsbad.

Russia! England will not need our friendship as much as she now needs it; and there may come governments here that will show they do not. In any event, you see, the world will be changed. It's changed already: witness Bernstorff¹ and Münsterberg² playing the part once played by Irish agitators!

All of which means that it is high time we were constructing a foreign service. First of all, Congress ought to make it possible to have half a dozen or more permanent foreign under-secretaries—men who, after service in the Department, could go out as Ministers and Ambassadors; it ought generously to reorganize the whole thing. It ought to have a competent study made of the foreign offices of other governments. Of course it ought to get room to work in. Then it ought at once to give its Ambassadors and Ministers homes and dignified treatment. We've got to play a part in the world whether we wish to or not. Think of these things.

The blindest great force in this world to-day is the Prussian War Party—blind and stupid.—Well, and the most weary man in London just at this hour is

Your humble servant,

W. H. P.

but he'll be all right in the morning.

To Arthur W. Page

[Undated]³

DEAR ARTHUR:

. . . I recall one night when we were dining at Sir John Jellicoe's, he told me that the Admiralty never slept—that he had a telephone by his bed every night.

¹German Ambassador in Washington.

²Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, whose openly expressed pro-Germanism was making him exceedingly unpopular in the United States.

³Evidently written in the latter part of September, 1914.

"Did it ever ring?" I asked.

"No; but it will."

You begin to see pretty clearly how English history has been made and makes itself. This afternoon Lady S—— told your mother of her three sons, one on a warship in the North Sea, another with the army in France, and a third in training to go. "How brave you all are!" said your mother, and her answer was: "They belong to their country; we can't do anything else." One of the daughters-in-law of the late Lord Salisbury came to see me to find out if I could make an inquiry about her son who was reported "missing" after the battle of Mons. She was dry-eyed, calm, self-restrained—very grateful for the effort I promised to make; but a Spartan woman would have envied her self-possession. It turned out that her son was dead.

You hear experiences like these almost every day. These are the kinds of women and the kinds of men that have made the British Empire and the English race. You needn't talk of decadence. All their great qualities are in them here and now. I believe that half the young men who came to Katharine's¹ dances last winter and who used to drop in at the house once in a while are dead in France already. They went as a matter of course. This is the reason they are going to win. Now these things impress you, as they come to you day by day.

There isn't any formal social life now—no dinners, no parties. A few friends dine with a few friends now and then very quietly. The ladies of fashion are hospital nurses and Red Cross workers, or they are collecting socks and blankets for the soldiers. One such woman told your mother to-day that she went to one of the recruiting camps every day and taught the young fellows

¹Miss Katharine A. Page, the Ambassador's daughter.

what colloquial French she could. Every man, woman, and child seems to be doing something. In the ordinary daily life, we see few of them: everybody is at work somewhere.

We live in a world of mystery: nothing can surprise us. The rumour is that a servant in one of the great families sent word to the Germans where the three English cruisers¹ were that German submarines blew up the other day. Not a German in the Kingdom can earn a penny. We're giving thousands of them money at the German Embassy to keep them alive. Our Austrian Embassy runs a soup kitchen where it feeds a lot of Austrians. Your mother went around there the other day and they showed that they thought they owe their daily bread to her. One day she went to one of the big houses where the English receive and distribute the thousands of Belgians who come here, poor creatures, to be taken care of. One old woman asked your mother in French if she were a princess. The lady that was with your mother answered, "Une Grande Dame." That seemed to do as well.

This government doesn't now let anybody carry any food away. But to-day they consented on condition I'd receive the food (for the Belgians) and consign it to Whitlock. This is their way of keeping it out of German hands—have the Stars and Stripes, so to speak, to cover every bag of flour and of salt. That's only one of 1,000 queer activities that I engage in. I have a German princess's² jewels in our safe—\$100,000 worth of them in my keeping; I have an old English nobleman's check for \$40,000 to be sent to men who have been building a house for his daugh-

¹The *Hogue*, the *Cressy*, and the *Aboukir* were torpedoed by a German submarine September 22, 1914. This exploit first showed the world the power of the submarine.

²Princess Lichnowsky, wife of the German Ambassador to Great Britain.

ter in Dresden—to be sent as soon as the German Government agrees not to arrest the lady for debt. I have sent Miss Latimer¹ over to France to bring an Austrian baby eight months old whose mother will take it to the United States and bring it up an American citizen! The mother can't go and get it for fear the French might detain her; I've got the English Government's permission for the family to go to the United States. Harold² is in Belgium, trying to get a group of English ladies home who went there to nurse wounded English and Belgians and whom the Germans threaten to kidnap and transport to German hospitals—every day a dozen new kinds of jobs.

London is weird and muffled and dark and, in the West End, deserted. Half the lamps are not lighted, and the upper half of the globes of the street lights are painted black—so the Zeppelin raiders may not see them. You've no idea what a strange feeling it gives one. The papers have next to no news. The 23rd day of the great battle is reported very much in the same words as the 3rd day was. Yet nobody talks of much else. The censor erases most of the matter the correspondents write. We're in a sort of dumb as well as dark world. And yet, of course, we know much more here than they know in any other European capital.

To the President

[Undated.]

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

When England, France, and Russia agreed the other day not to make peace separately, that cooked the Kaiser's goose. They'll wear him out. Since England thus has Frenchmen and Russians bound, the Allies are strength-

¹Private Secretary to Mrs. Page.

²Mr. Harold Fowler, the Ambassador's Secretary.

ened at their only weak place. That done, England is now going in deliberately, methodically, patiently to do the task. Even a fortnight ago, the people of this Kingdom didn't realize all that the war means to them. But the fever is rising now. The wounded are coming back, the dead are mourned, and the agony of hearing only that such-and-such a man is missing—these are having a prodigious effect. The men I meet now say in a matter-of-fact way: "Oh, yes! we'll get 'em, of course; the only question is, how long it will take us and how many of us it will cost. But no matter, we'll get 'em."

Old ladies and gentlemen of the high, titled world now begin by driving to my house almost every morning while I am at breakfast. With many apologies for calling so soon and with the fear that they interrupt me, they ask if I can make an inquiry in Germany for "my son," or "my nephew"—"he's among the missing." They never weep; their voices do not falter; they are brave and proud and self-restrained. It seems a sort of matter-of-course to them. Sometimes when they get home, they write me polite notes thanking me for receiving them. This morning the first man was Sir Dighton Probyn of Queen Alexandra's household—so dignified and courteous that you'd hardly have guessed his errand. And at intervals they come all day. Not a tear have I seen yet. They take it as a part of the price of greatness and of empire. You guess at their grief only by their reticence. They use as few words as possible and then courteously take themselves away. It isn't an accident that these people own a fifth of the world. Utterly unwarlike, they outlast anybody else when war comes. You don't get a sense of fighting here—only of endurance and of high resolve. Fighting is a sort of incident in the struggle to keep their world from German domination. . . .

To Edward M. House

October 11, 1914.

DEAR HOUSE:

There is absolutely nothing to write. It's war, war, war all the time; no change of subject; and, if you changed with your tongue, you couldn't change in your thought; war, war, war—"for God's sake find out if my son is dead or a prisoner"; rumours—they say that two French generals were shot for not supporting French, and then they say only one; and people come who have helped take the wounded French from the field and they won't even talk, it is so horrible; and a lady says that her own son (wounded) told her that when a man raised up in the trench to fire, the stench was so awful that it made him sick for an hour; and the poor Belgians come here by the tens of thousands, and special trains bring the English wounded; and the newspapers tell little or nothing—every day's reports like the preceding days'; and yet nobody talks about anything else.

Now and then the subject of its settlement is mentioned—Belgium and Serbia, of course, to be saved and as far as possible indemnified; Russia to have the Slav-Austrian States and Constantinople; France to have Alsace-Lorraine, of course; and Poland to go to Russia; Schleswig-Holstein and the Kiel Canal no longer to be German; all the South-German States to become Austrian and none of the German States to be under Prussian rule; the Hohenzollerns to be eliminated; the German fleet, or what is left of it, to become Great Britain's; and the German colonies to be used to satisfy such of the Allies as clamour for more than they get.

Meantime this invincible race is doing this revolutionary task marvellously—volunteering; trying to buy arms

in the United States (a Pittsburgh manufacturer is now here trying to close a bargain with the War Office!);¹ knitting socks and mufflers; taking in all the poor Belgians; stopping all possible expenditure; darkening London at night; doing every conceivable thing to win as if they had been waging this war always and meant to do nothing else for the rest of their lives—and not the slightest doubt about the result and apparently indifferent how long it lasts or how much it costs.

Every aspect of it gets on your nerves. I can't keep from wondering how the world will seem after it is over—Germany (that is, Prussia and its system) cut out like a cancer; England owning still more of the earth; Belgium—all the men dead; France bankrupt; Russia admitted to the society of nations; the British Empire entering on a new lease of life; no great navy but one; no great army but the Russian; nearly all governments in Europe bankrupt; Germany gone from the sea—in ten years it will be difficult to recall clearly the Europe of the last ten years. And the future of the world more than ever in our hands!

We here don't know what you think or what you know at home; we haven't yet any time to read United States newspapers, which come very, very late; nobody writes us real letters (or the censor gets 'em, perhaps!); and so the war, the war, the war is the one thing that holds our minds.

We have taken a house for the Chancery²—almost the size of my house in Grosvenor Square—for the same sum as rent that the landlord proposed hereafter to charge us for the old hole where we've been for twenty-nine years. For the first time Uncle Sam has a decent place

¹Probably a reference to Mr. Charles M. Schwab, President of the Bethlehem Steel Company, who was in London at this time on this errand.

²No. 4 Grosvenor Gardens.

in London. We've five times as much room and ten times as much work. Now—just this last week or two—I get off Sundays: that's doing well. And I don't now often go back at night. So, you see, we've much to be thankful for.—Shall we insure against Zeppelins? That's what everybody's asking. I told the Spanish Ambassador yesterday that I am going to ask the German Government for instructions about insuring their Embassy here!

Write and send some news. I saw an American to-day who says he's going home to-morrow. "Cable me," said I, "if you find the continent where it used to be."

Faithfully yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

P. S. It is strange how little we know what you know on your side and just what you think, what relative value you put on this and what on that. There's a new sort of loneliness sprung up because of the universal absorption in the war.

And I hear all sorts of contradictory rumours about the effect of the German crusade in the United States. Oh well, the world has got to choose whether it will have English or German domination in Europe; that's the single big question at issue. For my part I'll risk the English and then make a fresh start ourselves to outstrip them in the spread of well-being; in the elevation of mankind of all classes; in the broadening of democracy and democratic rule (which is the sheet-anchor of all men's hopes just as bureaucracy and militarism are the destruction of all men's hopes); in the spread of humane feeling and action; in the growth of human kindness; in the tender treatment of women and children and the old; in literature, in art; in the abatement of suffering; in great changes

in economic conditions which discourage poverty; and in science which gives us new leases on life and new tools and wider visions. These are *our* world tasks, with England as our friendly rival and helper. God bless us.

W. H. P.

To Arthur W. Page

London, November 6, 1914.

DEAR ARTHUR:

Those excellent photographs, those excellent apples, those excellent cigars—thanks. I'm thinking of sending Kitty¹ over again. They all spell and smell and taste of home—of the U. S. A. Even the messenger herself seems Unitedstatesy, and that's a good quality, I assure you. She's told us less news than you'd think she might for so long a journey and so long a visit; but that's the way with us all. And, I dare say, if it were all put together it would make a pretty big news-budget. And luckily for us (I often think we are among the luckiest families in the world) all she says is quite cheerful. It's a wonderful report she makes of County Line²—the country, the place, the house, and its inhabitants. Maybe, praise God, I'll see it myself some day—it and them.

But—but—I don't know when and can't guess out of this vast fog of war and doom. The worst of it is nobody knows just what is happening. I have, for an example, known for a week of the blowing up of a British dreadnaught³—thousands of people know it privately—and yet it isn't published! Such secrecy makes you fear there may be other and even worse secrets. But I don't really

¹Miss Katharine A. Page had just returned from a visit to the United States.

²Mr. Arthur W. Page's country home on Long Island.

³Evidently the *Audacious*, sunk by mine off the North of Ireland, October 27, 1914.

believe there are. What I am trying to say is, so far as news (and many other things) go, we are under a military rule.

It's beginning to wear on us badly. It presses down, presses down, presses down in an indescribable way. All the people you see have lost sons or brothers; mourning becomes visible over a wider area all the time; people talk of nothing else; all the books are about the war; ordinary social life is suspended—people are visibly growing older. And there are some aspects of it that are incomprehensible. For instance, a group of American and English military men and correspondents were talking with me yesterday—men who have been on both sides—in Germany and Belgium and in France—and they say that the Germans in France alone have had 750,000 men killed. The Allies have lost 400,000 to 500,000. This in France only. Take the other fighting lines and there must already be a total of 2,000,000 killed. Nothing like that has ever happened before in the history of the world. A flood or a fire or a wreck which has killed 500 has often shocked all mankind. Yet we know of this enormous slaughter and (in a way) are not greatly moved. I don't know of a better measure of the brutalizing effect of war—it's bringing us to take a new and more inhuman standard to measure events by.

As for any political or economic reckoning—that's beyond any man's ability yet. I see strings of incomprehensible figures that some economist or other now and then puts in the papers, summing up the loss in pounds sterling. But that means nothing because we have no proper measure of it. If a man lose \$10 or \$10,000 we can grasp that. But when nations shoot away so many million pounds sterling every day—that means nothing to me. I do know that there's going to be no money on

this side the world for a long time to buy American securities. The whole world is going to be hard up in consequence of the bankruptcy of these nations, the inestimable destruction of property, and the loss of productive men. I fancy that such a change will come in the economic and financial readjustment of the world as nobody can yet guess at.—Are Americans studying these things? It is not only South-American trade; it is all sorts of manufacturers; it is financial influence—if we can quit spending and wasting, and husband our earnings. There's no telling the enormous advantages we shall gain if we are wise.

The extent to which the German people have permitted themselves to be fooled is beyond belief. As a little instance of it, I enclose a copy of a letter that Lord Bryce gave me, written by an English woman who did good social work in her early life—a woman of sense—and who married a German merchant and has spent her married life in Germany. She is a wholly sincere person. This letter she wrote to a friend in England and—she believes every word of it. If she believes it, the great mass of the Germans believe similar things. I have heard of a number of such letters—sincere, as this one is. It gives a better insight into the average German mind than a hundred speeches by the Emperor.

This German and Austrian diplomatic business involves an enormous amount of work. I've now sent one man to Vienna and another to Berlin to straighten out almost hopeless tangles and lies about prisoners and such things and to see if they won't agree to swap more civilians detained in each country. On top of these, yesterday came the Turkish Embassy! Alas, we shall never see old Tewfik¹ again! This business begins briskly to-day

¹Tewfik Pasha, the very popular Turkish Ambassador to Great Britain.

with the detention of every Turkish consul in the British Empire. Lord! I dread the missionaries; and I know they're coming now." This makes four embassies. We put up a sign, "The American Embassy," on every one of them. Work? We're worked to death. Two nights ago I didn't get time to read a letter or even a telegram that had come that day till 11 o'clock at night. For on top of all these Embassies, I've had to become Commissary-General to feed 6,000,000 starving people in Belgium; and practically all the food must come from the United States. You can't buy food for export in any country in Europe. The devastation of Belgium defeats the Germans.—I don't mean in battle but I mean in the after-judgment of mankind. They cannot recover from that half as soon as they may recover from the economic losses of the war. The reducing of those people to starvation—that will stick to damn them in history, whatever they win or whatever they lose.

When's it going to end? Everybody who ought to know says at the earliest next year—next summer. Many say in two years. As for me, I don't know. I don't see how it can end soon. Neither can lick the other to a frazzle and neither can afford to give up till it is completely licked. This way of living in trenches and fighting a month at a time in one place is a new thing in warfare. Many a man shoots a cannon all day for a month without seeing a single enemy. There are many wounded men back here who say they haven't seen a single German. When the trenches become so full of dead men that the living can't stay there longer, they move back to other trenches. So it goes on. Each side has several more million men to lose. What the end will be—I mean when it will come, I don't see how to guess. The Allies are obliged to win; they have more food and more money,

and in the long run, more men. But the German fighting machine is by far the best organization ever made—not the best men, but the best organization; and the whole German people believe what the woman writes whose letter I send you. It'll take a long time to beat it.

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

The letter that Page inclosed, and another copy of which was sent to the President, purported to be written by the English wife of a German in Bremen. It was as follows:

It is very difficult to write, more difficult to believe that what I write will succeed in reaching you. My husband insists on my urging you—it is not necessary I am sure—to destroy the letter and all possible indications of its origin, should you think it worth translating. The letter will go by a business friend of my husband's to Holland, and be got off from there. For our business with Holland is now exceedingly brisk as you may understand. Her neutrality is most precious to us.¹

Well, I have of course a divided mind. I think of those old days in Liverpool and Devonshire—how far off they seem! And yet I spent all last year in England. It was in March last when I was with you and we talked of the amazing treatment of your army—I cannot any longer call it *our* army—by ministers crying for the resignation of its officers and eager to make their humiliation an election cry! How far off that seems, too! Let me tell you that it was the conduct of your ministers, Churchill especially, that made people here so confident that your

¹Germany was conducting her trade with the neutral world largely through Dutch and Danish ports.

Government could not fight. It seemed impossible that Lloyd George and his following could have the effrontery to pose as a "war" cabinet; still more impossible that any sane people could trust them if they did! Perhaps you may remember a talk we had also in March about Matthew Arnold whom I was reading again during my convalescence at Sidmouth. You said that "Friendship's Garland" and its Arminius could not be written now. I disputed that and told you that it was still true that your Government talked and "gassed" just as much as ever, and were wilfully blind to the fact that your power of action was wholly unequal to your words. As in 1870 so now. Nay, worse, your rulers have always known it perfectly well, but refused to see it or to admit it, because they wanted office and knew that to say the truth would bring the radical vote in the cities upon their poor heads. It is the old hypocrisy, in the sense in which Germans have always accused your nation: alas! and it is half my nation too. You pride yourselves on "Keeping your word" to Belgium. But you pride yourselves also, not so overtly just now, on always refusing to prepare yourselves to keep that word in *deed*. In the first days of August you knew, absolutely and beyond all doubt, that you could do nothing to make good your word. You had not the moral courage to say so, and, having said so, to act accordingly and to warn Belgium that your promise was "a scrap of paper," and effectively nothing more. It is nothing more, and has proved to be nothing more, but you do not see that your indelible disgrace lies just in this, that you unctuously proclaim that you are keeping your word when all the time you know, you have always known, that you refused utterly and completely to take the needful steps to enable you to translate word into action. Have you not torn up your "scrap of

paper" just as effectively as Germany has! As my husband puts it: England gave Belgium a check, a big check, and gave it with much ostentation, but took care that there should be no funds to meet it! Trusting to your check Belgium finds herself bankrupt, sequestered, blotted out as a nation. But I know England well enough to foresee that English statesmen, with our old friend, the Manchester *Guardian*, which we used to read in years gone by, will always quote with pride how they "guaranteed" the neutrality of Belgium.

As to the future. You cannot win. A nation that has prided itself on making no sacrifice for political power or even independence must pay for its pride. Our house here in Bremen has lately been by way of a centre for naval men, and to a less extent, for officers of the neighbouring commands. They are absolutely confident that they will land ten army corps in England before Christmas. It is terrible to know what they mean to go for. They mean to destroy. Every town which remotely is concerned with war material is to be annihilated. Birmingham, Bradford, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, Northampton are to be wiped out, and the men killed, ruthlessly hunted down. The fact that Lancashire and Yorkshire have held aloof from recruiting is not to save them. The fact that Great Britain is to be a Reichsland will involve the destruction of inhabitants, to enable German citizens to be planted in your country in their place. German soldiers hope that your poor creatures will resist, as patriots should, but they doubt it very much. For resistance will facilitate the process of clearance. Ireland will be left independent, and its harmlessness will be guaranteed by its inevitable civil war.

You may wonder, as I do sometimes, whether this hatred of England is not unworthy, or a form of mental

disease. But you must know that it is at bottom not hatred but contempt; fierce, unreasoning scorn for a country that pursues money and ease, from aristocrat to trade-unionist labourer, when it has a great inheritance to defend. I feel bitter, too, for I spent half my life in your country and my dearest friends are all English still; and yet I am deeply ashamed of the hypocrisy and make-believe that has initiated your national policy and brought you down. Now, one thing more. England is, after all, only a stepping stone. From Liverpool, Queenstown, Glasgow, Belfast, we shall reach out across the ocean. I firmly believe that within a year Germany will have seized the new Canal and proclaimed its defiance of the great Monroe Doctrine. We have six million Germans in the United States, and the Irish-Americans behind them. The Americans, believe me, are *as a nation* a cowardly nation, and will never fight organized strength except in defense of their own territories. With the Nova Scotian peninsula and the Bermudas, with the West Indies and the Guianas we shall be able to dominate the Americas. By our possession of the entire Western European seaboard America can find no outlet for its products except by our favour. Her finance is in German hands, her commercial capitals, New York and Chicago, are in reality German cities. It is some years since my father and I were in New York. But my opinion is not very different from that of the forceful men who have planned this war—that with Britain as a base the control of the American continent is under existing conditions the task of a couple of months.

I remember a conversation with Doctor Dohrn, the head of the great biological station at Naples, some four or five years ago. He was complaining of want of adequate subventions from Berlin. "Everything is wanted

for the Navy," he said. "And what really does Germany want with such a navy?" I asked. "She is always saying that she certainly does not regard it as a weapon against England." At that Doctor Dohrn raised his eyebrows. "But you, *gnädige Frau*, are a German?" "Of course." "Well, then, you will understand me when I say with all the seriousness I can command that this fleet of ours is intended to deal with smugglers on the shores of the Island of Rügen." I laughed. He became graver still. "The ultimate enemy of our country is America;¹ and I pray that I may see the day of an alliance between a beaten England and a victorious Fatherland against the bully of the Americas." Well, Germany and Austria were never friends until Sadowa had shown the way. Oh! if your country, which in spite of all I love so much, would but "see things clearly and see them whole."

Bremen, September 25, 1914.

To Ralph W. Page²

London, Sunday, November 15, 1914.

DEAR RALPH:

You were very good to sit down in Greensboro', or anywhere else, and to write me a fine letter. Do that often. You say there's nothing to do now in the Sandhills. Write us letters: that's a fair job!

God save us, we need 'em. We need anything from the sane part of the world to enable us to keep our balance. One of the commonest things you hear about now is the insanity of a good number of the poor fellows who come back from the trenches as well as of a good many

¹Mr. Irwin Laughlin, first secretary of the American Embassy in London, furnishes this note: "This statement about America was made to me more than once in Germany, between 1910 and 1912, by German officers, military and naval."

²Of Pinehurst, North Carolina, the Ambassador's oldest son.

Belgians. The sights and sounds they've experienced unhinge their reason. If this war keep up long enough—and it isn't going to end soon—people who have had no sight of it will go crazy, too—the continuous thought of it, the inability to get away from it by any device whatever—all this tells on us all. Letters, then, plenty of them—let 'em come.

You are in a peaceful land. The war is a long, long way off. You suffer nothing worse than a little idleness and a little poverty. They are nothing. I hope (and believe) that you get enough to eat. Be content, then. Read the poets, improve a piece of land, play with the baby, learn golf. That's the happy and philosophic and fortunate life in these times of world-madness.

As for the continent of Europe—forget it. We have paid far too much attention to it. It has ceased to be worth it. And now it's of far less value to us—and will be for the rest of your life—than it has ever been before. An ancient home of man, the home, too, of beautiful things—buildings, pictures, old places, old traditions, dead civilizations—the place where man rose from barbarism to civilization—it is now bankrupt, its best young men dead, its system of politics and of government a failure, its social structure enslaving and tyrannical—it has little help for us. The American spirit, which is the spirit that concerns itself with making life better for the whole mass of men—that's at home at its best with us. The whole future of the race is in the new countries—our country chiefly. This grows on one more and more and more. The things that are best worth while are on our side of the ocean. And we've got all the bigger job to do because of this violent demonstration of the failure of continental Europe. It's gone on living on a false basis till its elements got so mixed that it has simply blown itself to

pieces. It is a great convulsion of nature, as an earthquake or a volcano is. Human life there isn't worth what a yellow dog's life is worth in Moore County. Don't bother yourself with the continent of Europe any more—except to learn the value of a real democracy and the benefits it can confer precisely in proportion to the extent to which men trust to it. Did you ever read my Address delivered before the Royal Institution of Great Britain?¹ I enclose a copy. Now that's my idea of the very milk of the word. To come down to daily, deadly things—this upheaval is simply infernal. Parliament opened the other day and half the old lords that sat in their robes had lost their heirs and a larger part of the members of the House wore khaki. To-morrow they will vote \$1,125,000,000 for war purposes. They had already voted \$500,000,000. They'll vote more, and more, and more, if necessary. They are raising a new army of 2,000,000 men. Every man and every dollar they have will go if necessary. That's what I call an invincible people. The Kaiser woke up the wrong passenger. But for fifty years the continent won't be worth living on. My heavens! what bankruptcy will follow death!

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

To Frank C. Page²

Sunday, December 20th, 1914.

DEAR OLD MAN:

I envy both you and your mother³ your chance to make plans for the farm and the house and all the rest of it and

¹On June 12, 1914. The title of the address was "Some Aspects of the American Democracy."

²The Ambassador's youngest son.

³Mrs. W. H. Page was at this time spending a few weeks in the United States.

to have one another to talk to. And, most of all, you are where you can now and then change the subject. You can guess somewhat at our plight when Kitty and I confessed to one another last night that we were dead tired and needed to go to bed early and to stay long. She's sleeping yet, the dear kid, and I hope she'll sleep till lunch time. There isn't anything the matter with us but the war; but that's enough, Heaven knows. It's the worst ailment that has ever struck me. Then, if you add to that this dark, wet, foggy, sooty, cold, penetrating climate—you ought to thank your stars that you are not in it. I'm glad your mother's out of it, as much as we miss her; and miss her? Good gracious! there's no telling the hole her absence makes in all our life. But Kitty is a trump, true blue and dead game, and the very best company you can find in a day's journey. And, much as we miss your mother, you mustn't weep for us; we are having some fun and are planning more. I could have no end of fun with her if I had any time. But to work all day and till bedtime doesn't leave much time for sport.

The farm—the farm—the farm—it's yours and Mother's to plan and make and do with as you wish. I shall be happy whatever you do, even if you put the roof in the cellar and the cellar on top of the house.

If you have room enough (16 × 10 plus a fire and a bath are enough for me), I'll go down there and write a book. If you haven't it, I'll go somewhere else and write a book. I don't propose to be made unhappy by any house or by the lack of any house nor by anything whatsoever.

All the details of life go on here just the same. The war goes as slowly as death because it *is* death, death to millions of men. We've all said all we know about it to one another a thousand times; nobody knows anything else; nobody can guess when it will end; nobody has any doubt

about how it will end, unless some totally improbable and unexpected thing happens, such as the falling out of the Allies, which can't happen for none of them can afford it; and we go around the same bloody circle all the time. The papers never have any news; nobody ever talks about anything else; everybody is tired to death; nobody is cheerful; when it isn't sick Belgians, it's aeroplanes; and when it isn't aeroplanes, it's bombarding the coast of England. When it isn't an American ship held up, it's a fool American-German arrested as a spy; and when it isn't a spy it's a liar who *knows* the Zeppelins are coming to-night. We don't know anything; we don't believe anybody; we should be surprised at nothing; and at 3 o'clock I'm going to the Abbey to a service in honour of the 100 years of peace! The world has all got itself so jumbled up that the bays are all promontories, the mountains are all valleys, and earthquakes are necessary for our happiness. We have disasters for breakfast; mined ships for luncheon; burned cities for dinner; trenches in our dreams, and bombarded towns for small talk.

Peaceful seems the sandy landscape where you are, glad the very blackjacks, happy the curs, blessed the sheep, interesting the chin-whiskered clodhopper, innocent the fool darkey, blessed the mule, for it knows no war. And you have your mother—be happy, boy; you don't know how much you have to be thankful for.

Europe is ceasing to be interesting except as an example of how-not-to-do-it. It has no lessons for us except as a warning. When the whole continent has to go fighting—every blessed one of them—once a century, and half of them half the time between and all prepared even when they are not fighting, and when they shoot away all their money as soon as they begin to get rich a little and everybody else's money, too, and make the whole world poor,

and when they kill every third or fourth generation of the best men and leave the worst to rear families, and have to start over afresh every time with a worse stock—give me Uncle Sam and his big farm. We don't need to catch any of this European life. We can do without it all as well as we can do without the judges' wigs and the court costumes. Besides, I like a land where the potatoes have some flavour, where you can buy a cigar, and get your hair cut and have warm bathrooms.

Build the farm, therefore; and let me hear at every stage of that happy game. May the New Year be the best that has ever come for you!

Affectionately,
W. H. P.

CHAPTER XII

“WAGING NEUTRALITY”

I

THE foregoing letters sufficiently portray Page's attitude toward the war; they also show the extent to which he suffered from the daily tragedy. The great burdens placed upon the Embassy in themselves would have exhausted a physical frame that had never been particularly robust; but more disintegrating than these was the mental distress—the constant spectacle of a civilization apparently bent upon its own destruction. Indeed there were probably few men in Europe upon whom the war had a more depressing effect. In the first few weeks the Ambassador perceptibly grew older; his face became more deeply lined, his hair became grayer, his body thinner, his step lost something of its quickness, his shoulders began to stoop, and his manner became more and more abstracted. Page's kindness, geniality, and consideration had long since endeared him to all the embassy staff, from his chief secretaries to clerks and door-men; and all his associates now watched with affectionate solicitude the extent to which the war was wearing upon him. “In those first weeks,” says Mr. Irwin Laughlin, Page's most important assistant and the man upon whom the routine work of the Embassy largely fell, “he acted like a man who was carrying on his shoulders all the sins and burdens of the world. I know no man who seemed to realize so poignantly the misery and sorrow of it all. The sight of an England which he loved bleeding to death in

defence of the things in which he most believed was a grief that seemed to be sapping his very life."

Page's associates, however, noted a change for the better after the Battle of the Marne. Except to his most intimate companions he said little, for he represented a nation that was "neutral"; but the defeat of the Germans added liveliness to his step, gave a keener sparkle to his eye, and even brought back some of his old familiar gaiety of spirit. One day the Ambassador was lunching with Mr. Laughlin and one or two other friends.

"We did pretty well in that Battle of the Marne, didn't we?" he said.

"Isn't that remark slightly unneutral, Mr. Ambassador?" asked Mr. Laughlin.

At this a roar of laughter went up from the table that could be heard for a considerable distance.

About this same time Page's personal secretary, Mr. Harold Fowler, came to ask the Ambassador's advice about enlisting in the British Army. To advise a young man to take a step that might very likely result in his death was a heavy responsibility, and the Ambassador refused to accept it. It was a matter that the Secretary could settle only with his own conscience. Mr. Fowler decided his problem by joining the British Army; he had a distinguished career in its artillery and aviation service as he had subsequently in the American Army. Mr. Fowler at once discovered that his decision had been highly pleasing to his superior.

"I couldn't advise you to do this, Harold," Page said, placing his hand on the young man's shoulder, "but now that you've settled it yourself I'll say this—if I were a young man like you and in your circumstances, I should enlist myself."

Yet greatly as Page abhorred the Prussians and greatly

as his sympathies from the first day of the war were enlisted on the side of the Allies, there was no diplomat in the American service who was more “neutral” in the technical sense. “Neutral!” Page once exclaimed. “There’s nothing in the world so neutral as this embassy. Neutrality takes up all our time.” When he made this remark he was, as he himself used to say, “the German Ambassador to Great Britain.” And he was performing the duties of this post with the most conscientious fidelity. These duties were onerous and disagreeable ones and were made still more so by the unreasonableness of the German Government. Though the American Embassy was caring for the more than 70,000 Germans who were then living in England and was performing numerous other duties, the Imperial Government never realized that Page and the Embassy staff were doing it a service. With characteristic German tactlessness the German Foreign Office attempted to be as dictatorial to Page as though he had been one of its own junior secretaries. The business of the German Embassy in London was conducted with great ability; the office work was kept in the most ship-shape condition; yet the methods were American methods and the Germans seemed aggrieved because the routine of the Imperial bureaucracy was not observed. With unparalleled insolence they objected to the American system of accounting—not that it was unsound or did not give an accurate picture of affairs—but simply that it was not German. Page quietly but energetically informed the German Government that the American diplomatic service was not a part of the German organization, that its bookkeeping system was American, not German, that he was doing this work not as an obligation but as a favour, and that, so long as he continued to do it, he would perform the duty in his own way. At this the

Imperial Government subsided. Despite such annoyances Page refused to let his own feelings interfere with the work. The mere fact that he despised the Germans made him over-scrupulous in taking all precautions that they obtained exact justice. But this was all that the German cause in Great Britain did receive. His administration of the German Embassy was faultless in its technique, but it did not err on the side of over-enthusiasm.

His behaviour throughout the three succeeding years was entirely consistent with his conception of "neutrality." That conception, as is apparent from the letters already printed, was not the Wilsonian conception. Probably no American diplomat was more aggrieved at the President's definition of neutrality than his Ambassador to Great Britain. Page had no quarrel with the original neutrality proclamation; that was purely a routine governmental affair, and at the time it was issued it represented the proper American attitude. But the President's famous emendations filled him with astonishment and dismay. "We must be impartial in thought as well as in action," said the President on August 19th,¹ "we must put a curb upon our sentiments as well as upon every transaction that might be construed as a prejudice of one party to the prejudice of another." Page was prepared to observe all the traditional rules of neutrality, to insist on American rights with the British Government, and to do full legal justice to the Germans, but he declined to abrogate his conscience where his personal judgment of the rights and wrongs of the conflict were concerned. "Neutrality," he said in a letter to his brother, Mr. Henry A. Page, of Aberdeen, N. C., "is a

¹In a letter addressed to "My fellow Countrymen" and presented to the Senate by Mr. Chilton.

quality of government—an artificial unit. When a war comes a government must go in it or stay out of it. It must make a declaration to the world of its attitude. That's all that neutrality is. A government can be neutral, but no *man* can be.”

“The President and the Government,” Page afterward wrote, “in their insistence upon the moral quality of neutrality, missed the larger meaning of the war. It is at bottom nothing but the effort of the Berlin absolute monarch and his group to impose their will on as large a part of the world as they can overrun. The President started out with the idea that it was a war brought on by many obscure causes—economic and the like; and he thus missed its whole meaning. We have ever since been dealing with the chips which fly from the war machine and have missed the larger meaning of the conflict. Thus we have failed to render help to the side of Liberalism and Democracy, which are at stake in the world.”

Nor did Page think it his duty, in his private communications to his Government and his friends, to maintain that attitude of moral detachment which Mr. Wilson's pronouncement had evidently enjoined upon him. It was not his business to announce his opinions to the world, for he was not the man who determined the policy of the United States; that was the responsibility of the President and his advisers. But an ambassador did have a certain rôle to perform. It was his duty to collect information and impressions, to discover what important people thought of the United States and of its policies, and to send forward all such data to Washington. According to Page's theory of the Ambassadorial office, he was a kind of listening post on the front of diplomacy, and he would have grievously failed had he not done his best to keep headquarters informed. He did not regard it as

"loyalty" merely to forward only that kind of material which Washington apparently preferred to obtain; with a frankness which Mr. Wilson's friends regarded as almost ruthless, Page reported what he believed to be the truth. That this practice was displeasing to the powers of Washington there is abundant evidence. In early December, 1914, Colonel House was compelled to transmit a warning to the American Ambassador at London. "The President wished me to ask you to please be more careful not to express any unneutral feeling, either by word of mouth, or by letter and not even to the State Department. He said that both Mr. Bryan and Mr. Lansing had remarked upon your leaning in that direction and he thought that it would materially lessen your influence. He feels very strongly about this."

Evidently Page did not regard his frank descriptions of England under war as expressing unneutral feeling; at any rate, as the war went on, his letters, even those which he wrote to President Wilson, became more and more outspoken. Page's resignation was always at the President's disposal; the time came, as will appear, when it was offered; so long as he occupied his post, however, nothing could turn him from his determination to make what he regarded as an accurate record of events. This policy of maintaining an outward impartiality, and, at the same time, of bringing pressure to bear on Washington in behalf of the Allies, he called "waging neutrality."

Such was the mood in which Page now prepared to play his part in what was probably the greatest diplomatic drama in history. The materials with which this drama concerned itself were such apparently lifeless subjects as ships and cargoes, learned discourses on such abstract matters as the doctrine of continuous voyage, effective blockade, and conditional contraband; yet the

struggle, which lasted for three years, involved the greatest issue of modern times—nothing less than the survival of those conceptions of liberty, government, and society which make the basis of English-speaking civilization. To the newspaper reader of war days, shipping difficulties signified little more than a newspaper headline which he hastily read, or a long and involved lawyer's note which he seldom read at all—or, if he did, practically never understood. Yet these minute and neglected controversies presented to the American Nation the greatest decision in its history. Once before, a century ago, a European struggle had laid before the United States practically the same problem. Great Britain fought Napoleon, just as it had now been compelled to fight the Hohenzollern, by blockade; such warfare, in the early nineteenth century, led to retaliations, just as did the maritime warfare in the recent conflict, and the United States suffered, in 1812, as in 1914, from what were regarded as the depredations of both sides. In Napoleon's days France and Great Britain, according to the international lawyers, attacked American commerce in illegal ways; on strictly technical grounds this infant nation had an adequate cause of war against both belligerents; but the ultimate consequence of a very confused situation was a declaration of war against Great Britain. Though an England which was ruled by a George III or a Prince Regent—an England of rotten boroughs, of an ignorant and oppressed peasantry, and of a social organization in which caste was almost as definitely drawn as in an Oriental despotism—could hardly appeal to the enthusiastic democrat as embodying all the ideals of his system, yet the England of 1800 did represent modern progress when compared with the mediæval autocracy of Napoleon. If we take this broad view,

therefore, we must admit that, in 1812, we fought on the side of darkness and injustice against the forces that were making for enlightenment. The war of 1914 had not gone far when the thinking American foresaw that it would present to the American people precisely this same problem. What would the decision be? Would America repeat the experience of 1812, or had the teachings of a century so dissipated hatreds that it would be able to exert its influence in a way more worthy of itself and more helpful to the progress of mankind?

There was one great difference, however, between the position of the United States in 1812 and its position in 1914. A century ago we were a small and feeble nation, of undeveloped industries and resources and of immature character; our entrance into the European conflict, on one side or the other, could have little influence upon its results, and, in fact, it influenced it scarcely at all; the side we fought against emerged triumphant. In 1914, we had the greatest industrial organization and the greatest wealth of any nation and the largest white population of any country except Russia; the energy of our people and our national talent for success had long been the marvel of foreign observers. It mattered little in 1812 on which side the United States took its stand; in 1914 such a decision would inevitably determine the issue. Of all European statesmen there was one man who saw this point with a definiteness which, in itself, gives him a clear title to fame. That was Sir Edward Grey. The time came when a section of the British public was prepared almost to stone the Foreign Secretary in the streets of London, because they believed that his "subservience" to American trade interests was losing the war for Great Britain; his tenure of office was a constant struggle with British naval and military chiefs

who asserted that the Foreign Office, in its efforts to maintain harmonious relations with America, was hamstringing the British fleet, was rendering almost impotent its control of the sea, and was thus throwing away the greatest advantage which Great Britain possessed in its life and death struggle. “Some blight has been at work in our Foreign Office for years,” said the *Quarterly Review*, “steadily undermining our mastery of the sea.”

“The fleet is not allowed to act,” cried Lord Charles Beresford in Parliament; the Foreign Office was constantly interfering with its operations. The word “traitor” was not infrequently heard; there were hints that pro-Germanism was rampant and that officials in the Foreign Office were drawing their pay from the Kaiser. It was constantly charged that the navy was bringing in suspicious cargoes only to have the Foreign Office order their release. “I fight Sir Edward about stopping cargoes,” Page wrote to Colonel House in December, 1914; “literally fight. He yields and promises this or that. This or that doesn’t happen or only half happens. I know why. The military ministers balk him. I inquire through the back door and hear that the Admiralty and the War Office of course value American good-will, but they’ll take their chances of a quarrel with the United States rather than let copper get to Germany. The cabinet has violent disagreements. But the military men yield as little as possible. It was rumoured the other day that the Prime Minister threatened to resign; and I know that Kitchener’s sister told her friends, with tears in her eyes, that the cabinet shamefully hindered her brother.”

These criticisms unquestionably caused Sir Edward great unhappiness, but this did not for a moment move

him from his course. His vision was fixed upon a much greater purpose. Parliamentary orators might rage because the British fleet was not permitted to make indiscriminate warfare on commerce, but the patient and far-seeing British Foreign Secretary was the man who was really trying to win the war. He was one of the few Englishmen who, in August, 1914, perceived the tremendous extent of the struggle in which Great Britain had engaged. He saw that the English people were facing the greatest crisis since William of Normandy, in 1066, subjected their island to foreign rule. Was England to become the "Reichsland" of a European monarch, and was the British Empire to pass under the sway of Germany? Proud as Sir Edward Grey was of his country, he was modest in the presence of facts; and one fact of which he early became convinced was that Great Britain could not win unless the United States was ranged upon its side. Here was the country—so Sir Edward reasoned—that contained the largest effective white population in the world; that could train armies larger than those of any other nation; that could make the most munitions, build the largest number of battleships and merchant vessels, and raise food in quantities great enough to feed itself and Europe besides. This power, the Foreign Secretary believed, could determine the issue of the war. If Great Britain secured American sympathy and support, she would win; if Great Britain lost this sympathy and support, she would lose. A foreign policy that would estrange the United States and perhaps even throw its support to Germany would not only lose the war to Great Britain, but it would be perhaps the blackest crime in history, for it would mean the collapse of that British-American coöperation, and the destruction of those British-American ideals and institutions which are the

greatest facts in the modern world. This conviction was the basis of Sir Edward's policy from the day that Great Britain declared war. Whatever enemies he might make in England, the Foreign Secretary was determined to shape his course so that the support of the United States would be assured to his country. A single illustration shows the skill and wisdom with which he pursued this great purpose.

Perhaps nothing in the early days of the war enraged the British military chiefs more than the fact that cotton was permitted to go from the United States to Germany. That Germany was using this cotton in the manufacture of torpedoes to sink British ships and of projectiles to kill British soldiers in trenches was well known; nor did many people deny that Great Britain had the right to put cotton on the contraband list. Yet Grey, in the pursuit of his larger end, refused to take this step. He knew that the prosperity of the Southern States depended exclusively upon the cotton crop. He also knew that the South had raised the 1914 crop with no knowledge that a war was impending and that to deny the Southern planters their usual access to the German markets would all but ruin them. He believed that such a ruling would immediately alienate the sympathy of a large section of the United States and make our Southern Senators and Congressmen enemies of Great Britain. Sir Edward was also completely informed of the extent to which the German-Americans and the Irish-Americans were active and he was familiar with the aims of American pacifists. He believed that declaring cotton contraband at this time would bring together in Congress the Southern Senators and Congressmen, the representatives of the Irish and the German causes and the pacifists, and that this combination would exercise an influence that would be disastrous

to Great Britain. Two dangers constantly haunted Sir Edward's mind at this time. One was that the enemies of Great Britain would assemble enough votes in Congress to place an embargo upon the shipment of munitions from this country. Such an embargo might well be fatal to Great Britain, for at this time she was importing munitions, especially shells, in enormous quantities from the United States. The other was that such pressure might force the Government to convoy American cargoes with American warships. Great Britain then could stop the cargoes only by attacking our cruisers, and to attack a cruiser is an act of war. Had Congress taken either one of these steps the Allies would have lost the war in the spring of 1915. At a cabinet meeting held to consider this question, Sir Edward Grey set forth this view and strongly advised that cotton should not be made contraband at that time.¹ The Cabinet supported him and events justified the decision. Afterward, in Washington, several of the most influential Senators informed Sir Edward that this action had averted a great crisis.

This was the motive, which, as will appear as the story of our relations with Great Britain progresses, inspired the Foreign Secretary in all his dealings with the United States. His purpose was to use the sea power of Great Britain to keep war materials and foodstuffs out of Germany, but never to go to the length of making an unbridgeable gulf between the United States and Great Britain. The American Ambassador to Great Britain completely sympathized with this programme. It was Page's business to protect the rights of the United States, just as it was Grey's to protect the rights of Great Britain.

¹This was in October, 1914. In August, 1915, when conditions had changed, cotton was declared contraband.

Both were vigilant in protecting such rights, and animated differences between the two men on this point were not infrequent. Great Britain did many absurd and high-handed things in intercepting American cargoes, and Page was always active in “protesting” when the basis for the protest actually existed. But on the great overhanging issue the two men were at one. Like Grey, Page believed that there were more important things involved than an occasional cargo of copper or of oil cake. The American Ambassador thought that the United States should protect its shipping interests, but that it should realize that maritime law was not an exact science, that its principles had been modified by every great conflict in which the blockade had been an effective agency, and that the United States itself, in the Civil War, had not hesitated to make such changes as the changed methods of modern transportation had required. In other words he believed that we could safeguard our rights in a way that would not prevent Great Britain from keeping war materials and foodstuffs out of Germany. And like Sir Edward Grey, Page was obliged to contend with forces at home which maintained a contrary view. In this early period Mr. Bryan was nominally Secretary of State, but the man who directed the national policy in shipping matters was Robert Lansing, then counsellor of the Department. It is somewhat difficult to appraise Mr. Lansing justly, for in his conduct of his office there was not the slightest taint of malice. His methods were tactless, the phrasing of his notes lacked deftness and courtesy, his literary style was crude and irritating; but Mr. Lansing was not anti-British, he was not pro-German; he was nothing more nor less than a lawyer. The protection of American rights at sea was to him simply a “case” in which he had been retained as counsel for the plaintiff. As a

good lawyer it was his business to score as many points as possible for his client and the more weak joints he found in the enemy's armour the better did he do his job. It was his duty to scan the law books, to look up the precedents, to examine facts, and to prepare briefs that would be unassailable from a technical standpoint. To Mr. Lansing this European conflict was the opportunity of a lifetime. He had spent thirty years studying the intricate problems that now became his daily companions. His mind revelled in such minute details as ultimate destination, the continuous voyage as applied to conditional contraband, the searching of cargoes upon the high seas, belligerent trading through neutral ports, war zones, orders in council, and all the other jargon of maritime rights in time of war. These topics engrossed him as completely as the extension of democracy and the significance of British-American coöperation engrossed all the thoughts of Page and Grey.

That Page took this larger view is evident from the communications which he now began sending to the President. One that he wrote on October 15, 1914, is especially to the point. The date is extremely important; so early had Page formulated the standards that should guide the United States and so early had he begun his work of attempting to make President Wilson understand the real nature of the conflict. The position which Page now assumed was one from which he never departed.

To the President

In this great argument about shipping I cannot help being alarmed because we are getting into deep water uselessly. The Foreign Office has yielded unquestioningly to all our requests and has shown the sincerest wish

to meet all our suggestions, so long as it is not called upon to admit war materials into Germany. It will not give way to us in that. We would not yield it if we were in their place. Neither would the Germans. England will risk a serious quarrel or even hostilities with us rather than yield. You may look upon this as the final word.

Since the last lists of contraband and conditional contraband were published, such materials as rubber and copper and petroleum have developed entirely new uses in war. The British simply will not let Germany import them. Nothing that can be used for war purposes in Germany now will be used for anything else. Representatives of Spain, Holland, and all the Scandinavian states agree that they can do nothing but acquiesce and file protests and claims, and they admit that Great Britain has the right to revise the list of contraband. This is not a war in the sense in which we have hitherto used that word. It is a world-clash of systems of government, a struggle to the extermination of English civilization or of Prussian military autocracy. Precedents have gone to the scrap heap. We have a new measure for military and diplomatic action. Let us suppose that we press for a few rights to which the shippers have a theoretical claim. The American people gain nothing and the result is friction with this country; and that is what a very small minority of the agitators in the United States would like. Great Britain can any day close the Channel to all shipping or can drive Holland to the enemy and blockade her ports.

Let us take a little farther view into the future. If Germany win, will it make any difference what position Great Britain took on the Declaration of London? The Monroe Doctrine will be shot through. We shall have to have a great army and a great navy. But suppose that

England win. We shall then have an ugly academic dispute with her because of this controversy. Moreover, we shall not hold a good position for helping to compose the quarrel or for any other service.

The present controversy seems here, where we are close to the struggle, academic. It seems to us a petty matter when it is compared with the grave danger we incur of shutting ourselves off from a position to be of some service to civilization and to the peace of mankind.

In Washington you seem to be indulging in a more or less theoretical discussion. As we see the issue here, it is a matter of life and death for English-speaking civilization. It is not a happy time to raise controversies that can be avoided or postponed. We gain nothing, we lose every chance for useful coöperation for peace. In jeopardy also are our friendly relations with Great Britain in the sorest need and the greatest crisis in her history. I know that this is the correct view. I recommend most earnestly that we shall substantially accept the new Order in Council or acquiesce in it and reserve whatever rights we may have. I recommend prompt information be sent to the British Government of such action. I should like to inform Grey that this is our decision.

So far as our neutrality obligations are concerned, I do not believe that they require us to demand that Great Britain should adopt for our benefit the Declaration of London. Great Britain has never ratified it, nor have any other nations except the United States. In its application to the situation presented by this war it is altogether to the advantage of Germany.

I have delayed to write you this way too long. I have feared that I might possibly seem to be influenced by sympathy with England and by the atmosphere here. But I write of course solely with reference to our own

country's interest and its position after the reorganization of Europe.

Anderson¹ and Laughlin² agree with me emphatically.

WALTER H. PAGE.

II

The immediate cause of this protest was, as its context shows, the fact that the State Department was insisting that Great Britain should adopt the Declaration of London as a code of law for regulating its warfare on German shipping. Hostilities had hardly started when Mr. Bryan made this proposal; his telegram on this subject is dated August 7, 1914. "You will further state," said Mr. Bryan, "that this Government believes that the acceptance of these laws by the belligerents would prevent grave misunderstandings which may arise as to the relations between belligerents and neutrals. It therefore hopes that this inquiry may receive favourable consideration." At the same time Germany and the other belligerents were asked to adopt this Declaration.

The communication was thus more than a suggestion; it was a recommendation that was strongly urged. According to Page this telegram was the first great mistake the American Government made in its relations with Great Britain. In September, 1916, the Ambassador submitted to President Wilson a memorandum which he called "Rough notes toward an explanation of the British feeling toward the United States." "Of recent years," he said, "and particularly during the first year of the present Administration, the British feeling toward the United States was most friendly and cordial. About

¹Mr. Chandler P. Anderson, of New York, at this time advising the American Embassy on questions of international law.

²Mr. Irwin Laughlin, first secretary of the Embassy.

the time of the repeal of the tolls clause in the Panama Act, the admiration and friendliness of the whole British public (governmental and private) reached the highest point in our history. In considering the change that has taken place since, it is well to bear this cordiality in mind as a starting point. When the war came on there was at first nothing to change this attitude. The hysterical hope of many persons that our Government might protest against the German invasion of Belgium caused some feeling of disappointment, but thinking men did not share it; and, if this had been the sole cause of criticism of us, the criticism would have died out. The unusually high regard in which the President—and hence our Government—was then held was to a degree new. The British had for many years held the people of the United States in high esteem: they had not, as a rule, so favourably regarded the Government at Washington, especially in its conduct of foreign relations. They had long regarded our Government as ignorant of European affairs and amateurish in its cockiness. When I first got to London I found evidence of this feeling, even in the most friendly atmosphere that surrounded us. Mr. Bryan was looked on as a joke. They forgot him—rather, they never took serious notice of him. But, when the Panama tolls incident was closed, they regarded the President as his own Foreign Secretary; and thus our Government as well as our Nation came into this high measure of esteem.

“The war began. We, of course, took a neutral attitude, wholly to their satisfaction. But we at once interfered—or tried to interfere—by insisting on the Declaration of London, which no Great Power but the United States (I think) had ratified and which the British House of Lords had distinctly rejected. That Declaration would probably have given a victory to Germany if the

Allies had adopted it. In spite of our neutrality we insisted vigorously on its adoption and aroused a distrust in our judgment. Thus we started in wrong, so far as the British Government is concerned.”

The rules of maritime warfare which the American State Department so disastrously insisted upon were the direct outcome of the Hague Conference of 1907. That assembly of the nations recognized, what had long been a palpable fact, that the utmost confusion existed in the operations of warring powers upon the high seas. About the fundamental principle that a belligerent had the right, if it had the power, to keep certain materials of commerce from reaching its enemy, there was no dispute. But as to the particular articles which it could legally exclude there were as many different ideas as there were nations. That the blockade, a term which means the complete exclusion of cargoes and ships from an enemy's ports, was a legitimate means of warfare, was also an accepted fact, but as to the precise means in which the blockade could be enforced there was the widest difference of opinion. The Hague Conference provided that an attempt should be made to codify these laws into a fixed system, and the representatives of the nations met in London in 1908, under the presidency of the Earl of Desart, for this purpose. The outcome of their two months' deliberations was that document of seven chapters and seventy articles which has ever since been known as the Declaration of London. Here at last was the thing for which the world had been waiting so long—a complete system of maritime law for the regulation of belligerents and the protection of neutrals, which would be definitely binding upon all nations because all nations were expected to ratify it.

But the work of all these learned gentlemen was thrown away. The United States was the only party to the nego-

tiations that put the stamp of approval upon its labours. All other nations declined to commit themselves. In Great Britain the Declaration had an especially interesting course. In that country it became a football of party politics. The Liberal Government was at first inclined to look upon it favourably; the Liberal House of Commons actually ratified it. It soon became apparent, however, that this vote did not represent the opinion of the British public. In fact, few measures have ever aroused such hostility as this Declaration, once its details became known. For more than a year the hubbub against it filled the daily press, the magazines, the two Houses of Parliament and the hustings; Rudyard Kipling even wrote a poem denouncing it. The adoption of the Declaration, these critics asserted, would destroy the usefulness of the British fleet. In many quarters it was described as a German plot—as merely a part of the preparations which Germany was making for world conquest. The fact is that the Declaration could not successfully stand the analysis to which it was now mercilessly submitted; the House of Lords rejected it, and this action met with more approbation than had for years been accorded the legislative pronouncements of that chamber. The Liberal House of Commons was not in the least dissatisfied with this conclusion, for it realized that it had made a mistake and it was only too happy to be permitted to forget it.

When the war broke out there was therefore no single aspect of maritime law which was quite so odious as the Declaration of London. Great Britain realized that she could never win unless her fleet were permitted to keep contraband out of Germany and, if necessary, completely to blockade that country. The two greatest conflicts of the nineteenth century were the European struggle with Napoleon and the American Civil War. In both the

blockade had been the decisive element, and that this great agency would similarly determine events in this even greater struggle was apparent. What enraged the British public against any suggestion of the Declaration was that it practically deprived Great Britain of this indispensable means of weakening the enemy. In this Declaration were drawn up lists of contraband, non-contraband, and conditional contraband, and all of these, in English eyes, worked to the advantage of Germany and against the advantage of Great Britain. How absurd this classification was is evident from the fact that airplanes were not listed as absolute contraband of war. Germany's difficulty in getting copper was one of the causes of her collapse; yet the Declaration put copper for ever on the non-contraband list; had this new code been adopted, Germany could have imported enormous quantities from this country, instead of being compelled to reinforce her scanty supply by robbing housewives of their kitchen utensils, buildings of their hardware, and church steeples of their bells. Germany's constant scramble for rubber formed a diverting episode in the struggle; there are indeed few things so indispensable in modern warfare; yet the Declaration included rubber among the innocent articles and thus opened up to Germany the world's supply. But the most serious matter was that the Declaration would have prevented Great Britain from keeping foodstuffs out of the Fatherland.

When Mr. Bryan, therefore, blandly asked Great Britain to accept the Declaration as its code of maritime warfare, he was asking that country to accept a document which Great Britain, in peace time, had repudiated and which would, in all probability, have caused that country to lose the war. The substance of this request was bad enough, but the language in which it was phrased made

matters much worse. It appears that only the intervention of Colonel House prevented the whole thing from becoming a tragedy.

From Edward M. House

115 East 53rd Street,
New York City.
October 3, 1914.

HIS EXCELLENCY,

The American Ambassador, London, England.

DEAR PAGE:

. . . I have just returned from Washington where I was with the President for nearly four days. He is looking well and is well. Sometimes his spirits droop, but then, again, he is his normal self.

I had the good fortune to be there at a time when the discussion of the Declaration of London had reached a critical stage. Bryan was away and Lansing, who had not mentioned the matter to Sir Cecil,¹ prepared a long communication to you which he sent to the President for approval. The President and I went over it and I strongly urged not sending it until I could have a conference with Sir Cecil. I had this conference the next day without the knowledge of any one excepting the President, and had another the day following. Sir Cecil told me that if the dispatch had gone to you as written and you had shown it to Sir Edward Grey, it would almost have been a declaration of war; and that if, by any chance, the newspapers had got hold of it as they so often get things from our State Department, the greatest panic would have prevailed. He said it would have been the Venezuela incident magnified by present conditions.

At the President's suggestion, Lansing then prepared a

¹Sir Cecil Spring Rice, British Ambassador at Washington.

cablegram to you. This, too, was objectionable and the President and I together softened it down into the one you received.

Faithfully yours,
E. M. HOUSE.

In justice to Mr. Lansing, a passage in a later letter of Colonel House must be quoted: “It seems that Lansing did not write the particular dispatch to you that was objected to. Someone else prepared it and Lansing rather too hastily submitted it to the President, with the result you know.”

This suppressed communication is probably for ever lost, but its tenor may perhaps be gathered from instructions which were actually sent to the Ambassador about this time. After eighteen typewritten pages of not too urbanely expressed discussion of the Declaration of London and the general subject of contraband, Page was instructed to call the British Government’s attention to the consequences which followed shipping troubles in previous times. It is hard to construe this in any other way than as a threat to Great Britain of a repetition of 1812:

Confidential. You will not fail to impress upon His Excellency¹ the gravity of the issues which the enforcement of the Order in Council seems to presage, and say to him in substance as follows:

It is a matter of grave concern to this Government that the particular conditions of this unfortunate war should be considered by His Britannic Majesty’s Government to be such as to justify them in advancing doctrines and advocating practices which in the past aroused strong opposition on the part of the Government of the United

¹Sir Edward Grey.

States, and bitter feeling among the American people. This Government feels bound to express the fear, though it does so reluctantly, that the publicity, which must be given to the rules which His Majesty's Government announce that they intend to enforce, will awaken memories of controversies, which it is the earnest desire of the United States to forget or to pass over in silence. . . .

Germany, of course, promptly accepted the Declaration, for the suggestion fitted in perfectly with her programme; but Great Britain was not so acquiescent. Four times was Page instructed to ask the British Government to accede unconditionally, and four times did the Foreign Office refuse. Page was in despair. In the following letter he notified Colonel House that if he were instructed again to move in this matter he would resign his ambassadorship.

To Edward M. House

American Embassy, London,
October 22, 1914.

DEAR HOUSE:

This is about the United States and England. Let's get that settled before we try our hands at making peace in Europe.

One of our greatest assets is the friendship of Great Britain, and our friendship is a still bigger asset for her, and she knows it and values it. Now, if either country should be damfool enough to throw this away because old Stone¹ roars in the Senate about something that hasn't happened, then this crazy world would be completely mad

¹ Senator William J. Stone, perhaps the leading spokesman of the pro-German cause in the United States Senate. Senator Stone represented Missouri, a state with a large German-American element.

all round, and there would be no good-will left on earth at all.

The case is plain enough to me. England is going to keep war-materials out of Germany as far as she can. We'd do it in her place. Germany would do it. Any nation would do it. That's all she has declared her intention of doing. And, if she be let alone, she'll do it in a way to give *us* the very least annoyance possible; for she'll go any length to keep our friendship and good will. And *she has not confiscated a single one of our cargoes even of unconditional contraband*. She has stopped some of them and bought them herself, but confiscated not one. All right; what do we do? We set out on a comprehensive plan to regulate the naval warfare of the world and we up and ask 'em all, "Now, boys, all be good, damn you, and agree to the Declaration of London."

"Yah," says Germany, "if England will."

Now Germany isn't engaged in naval warfare to count, and she never even paid the slightest attention to the Declaration all these years. But she saw that it would hinder England and help her now, by forbidding England to stop certain very important war materials from reaching Germany. "Yah," said Germany. But England said that her Parliament had rejected the Declaration in times of peace and that she could now hardly be expected to adopt it in the face of this Parliamentary rejection. But, to please us, she agreed to adopt it with only two changes.

Then Lansing to the bat:

"No, no," says Lansing, "you've got to adopt it all."

Four times he's made me ask for its adoption, the last time coupled with a proposition that if England would adopt it, she might issue a subsequent proclamation saying that, since the Declaration is contradictory, she will

construe it her own way, and the United States will raise no objection!

Then he sends eighteen pages of fine-spun legal arguments (not all sound by any means) against the sections of the English proclamations that have been put forth, giving them a strained and unfriendly interpretation.

In a word, England has acted in a friendly way to us and will so act, if we allow her. But Lansing, instead of trusting to her good faith and reserving all our rights under international law and usage, imagines that he can force her to agree to a code that the Germans now agree to because, in Germany's present predicament, it will be especially advantageous to Germany. Instead of trusting her, he assumes that she means to do wrong and proceeds to try to bind her in advance. He hauls her up and tries her in court—that's his tone.

Now the relations that I have established with Sir Edward Grey have been built up on frankness, fairness and friendship. I can't have relations of any other sort nor can England and the United States have relations of any other sort. This is the place we've got to now. Lansing seems to assume that the way to an amicable agreement is through an angry controversy.

Lansing's method is the trouble. He treats Great Britain, to start with, as if she were a criminal and an opponent. That's the best way I know to cause trouble to American shipping and to bring back the good old days of mutual hatred and distrust for a generation or two. If that isn't playing into the hands of the Germans, what would be? And where's the "neutrality" of this kind of action?

See here: If we let England go on, we can throw the whole responsibility on her and reserve all our rights under international law and usage and claim damages (and get

'em) for every act of injury, if acts of injury occur; and we can keep her friendship and good-will. Every other neutral nation is doing that. Or we can insist on regulating all naval warfare and have a quarrel and refer it to a Bryan-Peace-Treaty Commission and claim at most the selfsame damages with a less chance to get 'em. We can get damages without a quarrel; or we can have a quarrel and probably get damages. Now, why, in God's name, should we provoke a quarrel?

The curse of the world is little men who for an imagined small temporary advantage throw away the long growth of good-will nurtured by wise and patient men and who cannot see the lasting and far greater future evil they do. Of all the years since 1776 this great war-year is the worst to break the 100 years of our peace, or even to ruffle it. I pray you, good friend, get us out of these incompetent lawyer-hands.

Now about the peace of Europe. Nothing can yet be done, perhaps nothing now can ever be done by us. The Foreign Office doubts our wisdom and prudence since Lansing came into action. The whole atmosphere is changing. One more such move and they will conclude that Dernburg and Bernstorff have seduced us—without our knowing it, to be sure; but their confidence in our judgment will be gone. God knows I have tried to keep this confidence intact and our good friendship secure. But I have begun to get despondent over the outlook since the President telegraphed me that Lansing's proposal would settle the matter. I still believe he did not understand it—he couldn't have done so. Else he could not have approved it. But that tied my hands. If Lansing again brings up the Declaration of London—after four flat and reasonable rejections—I shall resign. I will not be the instrument of a perfectly gratuitous and ineffective

insult to this patient and fair and friendly government and people who in my time have done us many kindnesses and never an injury but Carden,¹ and who sincerely try now to meet our wishes. It would be too asinine an act ever to merit forgiveness or ever to be forgotten. I should blame myself the rest of my life. It would grieve Sir Edward more than anything except this war. It would knock the management of foreign affairs by this Administration into the region of sheer idiocy. I'm afraid any peace talk from us, as it is, would merely be whistling down the wind. If we break with England—not on any case or act of violence to our shipping—but on a useless discussion, in advance, of general principles of conduct during the war—just for a discussion—we've needlessly thrown away our great chance to be of some service to this world gone mad. If Lansing isn't stopped, that's what he will do. Why doesn't the President see Spring Rice? Why don't you take him to see him?

Good night, my good friend. I still have hope that the President himself will take this in hand.

Yours always,

W. H. P.

The letters and the cablegrams which Page was sending to Colonel House and the State Department at this time evidently ended the matter. By the middle of October the two nations were fairly deadlocked. Sir Edward Grey's reply to the American proposal had been an acceptance of the Declaration of London with certain modifications. For the list of contraband in the Declaration he had submitted the list already adopted by Great Britain in its Order in Council, and he had also rejected that article which made it impossible for Great Britain

¹See Chapter VII.

to apply the doctrine of “continuous voyage” to conditional contraband. The modified acceptance, declared Mr. Lansing, was a practical rejection—as of course it was, and as it was intended to be. So the situation remained for several exciting weeks, the State Department insisting on the Declaration in full, precisely as the legal luminaries had published it five years before, the Foreign Office courteously but inflexibly refusing to accede. Only the cordial personal relations which prevailed between Grey and Page prevented the crisis from producing the most disastrous results. Finally, on October 17th, Page proposed by cable an arrangement which he hoped would settle the matter. This was that the King should issue a proclamation accepting the Declaration with practically the modifications suggested above, and that a new Order in Council should be issued containing a new list of contraband. Sir Edward Grey was not to ask the American Government to accept this proclamation; all that he asked was that Washington should offer no objections to it. It was proposed that the United States at the same time should publish a note withdrawing its suggestion for the adoption of the Declaration, and explaining that it proposed to rest the rights of its citizens upon the existing rules of international law and the treaties of the United States. This solution was accepted. It was a defeat for Mr. Lansing, of course, but he had no alternative. The relief that Page felt is shown in the following memorandum, written soon after the tension had ceased:

“That insistence on the Declaration entire came near to upsetting the whole kettle of fish. It put on me the task of insisting on a general code—at a time when the fiercest war in history was every day becoming fiercer and more desperate—which would have prevented the British

from putting on their contraband list several of the most important war materials—accompanied by a proposal that would have angered every neutral nation through which supplies can possibly reach Germany and prevented this Government from making friendly working arrangements with them; and, after Sir Edward Grey had flatly declined for these reasons, I had to continue to insist. I confess it did look as if we were determined to dictate to him how he should conduct the war—and in a way that distinctly favoured the Germans.

“I presented every insistence; for I should, of course, not have been excusable if I had failed in any case vigorously to carry out my instructions. But every time I plainly saw matters getting worse and worse; and I should have failed of my duty also if I had not so informed the President and the Department. I can conceive of no more awkward situation for an Ambassador or for any other man under Heaven. I turned the whole thing over in my mind backward and forward a hundred times every day. For the first time in this stress and strain, I lost my appetite and digestion and did not know the day of the week nor what month it was—seeing the two governments rushing toward a very serious clash, which would have made my mission a failure and done the Administration much hurt, and have sowed the seeds of bitterness for generations to come.

“One day I said to Anderson (whose assistance is in many ways invaluable): ‘Of course nobody is infallible—least of all we. Is it possible that we are mistaken? You and Laughlin and I, who are close to it all, are absolutely agreed. But may there not be some important element in the problem that we do not see? Summon and nurse every doubt that you can possibly muster up of the correctness of our view, put yourself on the defensive, recall

every mood you may have had of the slightest hesitation, and tell me to-morrow of every possible weak place there may be in our judgment and conclusions.’ The next day Anderson handed me seventeen reasons why it was unwise to persist in this demand for the adoption of the Declaration of London. Laughlin gave a similar opinion. I swear I spent the night in searching every nook and corner of my mind and I was of the same opinion the next morning. There was nothing to do then but the most unwelcome double duty: (1) Of continuing to carry out instructions, at every step making a bad situation worse and running the risk of a rupture (which would be the only great crime that now remains uncommitted in the world); and (2) of trying to persuade our own Government that this method was the wrong method to pursue. I know it is not my business to make policies, but I conceive it to be my business to report when they fail or succeed. Now if I were commanded to look throughout the whole universe for the most unwelcome task a man may have, I think I should select this. But, after all, a man has nothing but his own best judgment to guide him; and, if he follow that and fail—that’s all he *can* do. I do reverently thank God that we gave up that contention. We *may* have trouble yet, doubtless we shall, but it will not be trouble of our own making, as that was.

“Tyrrell¹ came into the reception room at the Foreign Office the day after our withdrawal, while I was waiting to see Sir Edward Grey, and he said: ‘I wish to tell you personally—just privately between you and me—how infinite a relief it is to us all that your Government has withdrawn that demand. We couldn’t accept it; our refusal was not stubborn nor pig-headed: it was a physical necessity in order to carry on the war with any hope of success.’

¹Private secretary to Sir Edward Grey.

Then, as I was going out, he volunteered this remark: 'I make this guess—that that programme was not the work of the President but of some international prize court enthusiast (I don't know who) who had failed to secure the adoption of the Declaration when parliaments and governments could discuss it at leisure and who hoped to jam it through under the pressure of war and thus get his prize court international.' I made no answer for several reasons, one of which is, I do not know whose programme it was. All that I know is that I have here, on my desk at my house, a locked dispatch book half full of telegrams and letters insisting on it, which I do not wish (now at least) to put in the Embassy files, and the sight of which brings the shuddering memory of the worst nightmare I have ever suffered.

"Now we can go on, without being a party to any general programme, but in an independent position vigorously stand up for every right and privilege under law and usage and treaties; and we have here a government that we can deal with frankly and not (I hope) in a mood to suspect us of wishing to put it at a disadvantage for the sake of a general code or doctrine. A land and naval and air and submarine battle (the greatest battle in the history of the belligerent race of man) within 75 miles of the coast of England, which hasn't been invaded since 1066 and is now in its greatest danger since that time; and this is no time I fear, to force a great body of doctrine on Great Britain. God knows I'm afraid some American boat will run on a mine somewhere in the Channel or the North Sea. There's war there as there is on land in Germany. Nobody tries to get goods through on land on the continent, and they make no complaints that commerce is stopped. Everybody tries to ply the Channel and the North Sea as usual, both of which have German and English mines

and torpedo craft and submarines almost as thick as batteries along the hostile camps on land. The British Government (which now issues marine insurance) will not insure a British boat to carry food to Holland en route to the starving Belgians; and I hear that no government and no insurance company will write insurance for anything going across the North Sea. I wonder if the extent and ferocity and danger of this war are fully realized in the United States?

“There is no chance yet effectively to talk of peace.¹ The British believe that their civilization and their Empire are in grave danger. They are drilling an army of a million men here for next spring; more and more troops come from all the Colonies, where additional enlistments are going on. They feel that to stop before a decisive result is reached would simply be provoking another war, after a period of dread such as they have lived through the last ten years; a large and increasing proportion of the letters you see are on black-bordered paper and this whole island is becoming a vast hospital and prisoners’ camp—all which, so far from bringing them to think of peace, urges them to renewed effort; and all the while the bitterness grows.

“The Straus incident¹ produced the impression here that it was a German trick to try to shift the responsibility of continuing the war, to the British shoulders. Mr. Sharp’s bare mention of peace in Paris caused the French censor to forbid the transmission of a harmless interview; and our insistence on the Declaration left, for the time being at least, a distinct distrust of our judgment and perhaps even of our good-will. It was suspected—I am

¹The reference is to an attempt by Germany to start peace negotiations in September, 1914, after the Battle of the Marne. This is described in the next chapter.

sure—that the German influence in Washington had unwittingly got influence over the Department. The atmosphere (toward me) is as different now from what it was a week ago as Arizona sunshine is from a London fog, as much as to say, ‘After all, perhaps, you don’t *mean* to try to force us to play into the hands of our enemies!’ ”

III

And so this crisis was passed; it was the first great service that Page had rendered the cause of the Allies and his own country. Yet shipping difficulties had their more agreeable aspects. Had it not been for the fact that both Page and Grey had an understanding sense of humour, neutrality would have proved a more difficult path than it actually was. Even amid the tragic problems with which these two men were dealing there was not lacking an occasional moment’s relaxation into the lighter aspect of things. One of the curious memorials preserved in the British Foreign Office is the cancelled \$15,000,000 check with which Great Britain paid the *Alabama* claims. That the British should frame this memento of their great diplomatic defeat and hang it in the Foreign Office is an evidence of the fact that in statesmanship, as in less exalted **matters**, the English are excellent sportsmen. The real justification of the honour paid to this piece of paper, of course, is that the settlement of the *Alabama* claims by arbitration signalized a great forward step in international relations and did much to heal a century’s troubles between the United States and Great Britain. Sir Edward Grey used frequently to call Page’s attention to this document. It represented the amount of money, then considered large, which Great Britain had paid the United States for the depredations on American shipping for which she was responsible during the Civil War.

One day the two men were discussing certain detentions of American cargoes—high-handed acts which, in Page’s opinion, were unwarranted. Not infrequently, in the heat of discussion, Page would get up and pace the floor. And on this occasion his body, as well as his mind, was in a state of activity. Suddenly his eye was attracted by the framed Alabama check. He leaned over, peered at it intensely, and then quickly turned to the Foreign Secretary:

“If you don’t stop these seizures, Sir Edward, some day you’ll have your entire room papered with things like that!”

Not long afterward Sir Edward in his turn scored on Page. The Ambassador called to present one of the many State Department notes. The occasion was an embarrassing one, for the communication was written in the Department’s worst literary style. It not infrequently happened that these notes, in the form in which Page received them, could not be presented to the British Government; they were so rasping and undiplomatic that Page feared that he would suffer the humiliation of having them returned, for there are certain things which no self-respecting Foreign Office will accept. On such occasions it was the practice of the London Embassy to smooth down the language before handing the paper to the Foreign Secretary. The present note was one of this kind; but Page, because of his friendly relations with Grey, decided to transmit the communication in its original shape.

Sir Edward glanced over the document, looked up, and remarked, with a twinkle in his eye,—

“This reads as though they thought that they are still talking to George the Third.”

The roar of laughter that followed was something quite

unprecedented amid the thick and dignified walls of the Foreign Office.

One of Page's most delicious moments came, however, after the Ministry of Blockade had been formed, with Lord Robert Cecil in charge. Lord Robert was high minded and conciliatory, but his knowledge of American history was evidently not without its lapses. One day, in discussing the ill-feeling aroused in the United States by the seizure of American cargoes, Page remarked banteringly:

"You must not forget the Boston Tea Party, Lord Robert."

The Englishman looked up, rather puzzled.

"But you must remember, Mr. Page, that I have never been in Boston. I have never attended a tea party there."

It has been said that the tact and good sense of Page and Grey, working sympathetically for the same end, avoided many an impending crisis. The trouble caused early in 1915 by the ship *Dacia* and the way in which the difficulty was solved, perhaps illustrate the value of this coöperation at its best. In the early days of the War Congress passed a bill admitting foreign ships to American registry. The wisdom and even the "neutrality" of such an act were much questioned at the time. Colonel House, in one of his early telegrams to the President, declared that this bill "is full of lurking dangers." Colonel House was right. The trouble was that many German merchant ships were interned in American harbours, fearing to put to sea, where the watchful British warships lay waiting for them. Any attempt to place these vessels under the American flag, and to use them for trade between American and German ports, would at once cause a crisis with the Allies, for such a paper change in ownership

would be altogether too transparent. Great Britain viewed this legislation with disfavour, but did not think it politic to protest such transfers generally; Spring Rice contented himself with informing the State Department that his government would not object so long as this changed status did not benefit Germany. If such German ships, after being transferred to the American flag, engaged in commerce between American ports and South American ports, or other places remotely removed from the Fatherland, Great Britain would make no difficulty. The *Dacia*, a merchantman of the Hamburg-America line, had been lying at her wharf in Port Arthur, Texas, since the outbreak of the war. In early January, 1915, she was purchased by Mr. E. N. Breitung, of Marquette, Michigan. Mr. Breitung caused great excitement in the newspapers when he announced that he had placed the *Dacia* under American registry, according to the terms of this new law, had put upon her an American crew, and that he proposed to load her with cotton and sail for Germany. The crisis had now arisen which the well-wishers of Great Britain and the United States had so dreaded. Great Britain's position was a difficult one. If it acquiesced, the way would be opened for placing under American registry all the German and Austrian ships that were then lying unoccupied in American ports and using them in trade between the United States and the Central Powers. If Great Britain seized the *Dacia*, then there was the likelihood that this would embroil her with the American Government—and this would serve German purposes quite as well.

Sir Cecil Spring Rice, the British Ambassador at Washington, at once notified Washington that the *Dacia* would be seized if she sailed for a German port. The cotton which she intended to carry was at that time not contra-

band, but the vessel itself was German and was thus subject to apprehension as enemy property. The seriousness of this position was that technically the *Dacia* was now an American ship, for an American citizen owned her, she carried an American crew, she bore on her flagstaff the American flag, and she had been admitted to American registry under a law recently passed by Congress. How could the United States sit by quietly and permit this seizure to take place? When the *Dacia* sailed on January 23rd the excitement was keen; the voyage had obtained a vast amount of newspaper advertising, and the eyes of the world were fixed upon her. German sympathizers attributed the attitude of the American Government in permitting the vessel to sail as a "dare" to Great Britain, and the fact that Great Britain had announced her intention of taking up this "dare" made the situation still more tense.

When matters had reached this pass Page one day dropped into the Foreign Office.

"Have you ever heard of the British fleet, Sir Edward?" he asked.

Grey admitted that he had, though the question obviously puzzled him.

"Yes," Page went on musingly. "We've all heard of the British fleet. Perhaps we have heard too much about it. Don't you think it's had too much advertising?"

The Foreign Secretary looked at Page with an expression that implied a lack of confidence in his sanity.

"But have you ever heard of the French fleet?" the American went on. "France has a fleet too, I believe."

Sir Edward granted that.

"Don't you think that the French fleet ought to have a little advertising?"

“What on earth are you talking about?”

“Well,” said Page, “there’s the *Dacia*. Why not let the French fleet seize it and get some advertising?”

A gleam of understanding immediately shot across Grey’s face. The old familiar twinkle came into his eye.

“Yes,” he said, “why not let the Belgian royal yacht seize it?”

This suggestion from Page was one of the great inspirations of the war. It amounted to little less than genius. By this time Washington was pretty wearied of the *Dacia*, for mature consideration had convinced the Department that Great Britain had the right on its side. Washington would have been only too glad to find a way out of the difficult position into which it had been forced, and this Page well understood. But this government always finds itself in an awkward plight in any controversy with Great Britain, because the hyphenates raise such a noise that it has difficulty in deciding such disputes upon their merits. To ignore the capture of this ship by the British would have brought all this hullabaloo again about the ears of the Administration. But the position of France is entirely different; the memories of Lafayette and Rochambeau still exercise a profound spell on the American mind; France does not suffer from the persecution of hyphenate populations, and Americans will stand even outrages from France without getting excited. Page knew that if the British seized the *Dacia*, the cry would go up in certain quarters for immediate war, but that, if France committed the same crime, the guns of the adversary would be spiked. It was purely a case of sentiment and “psychology.” And so the event proved. His suggestion was at once acted on; a French cruiser went out into the Channel, seized the offending ship, took it into port, where a French prize court promptly condemned it. The proceeding did not

cause even a ripple of hostility. The *Dacia* was sold to Frenchmen, rechristened the *Yser* and put to work in the Mediterranean trade. The episode was closed in the latter part of 1915 when a German submarine torpedoed the vessel and sent it to the bottom.

Such was the spirit which Page and Sir Edward Grey brought to the solution of the shipping problems of 1914-1917. There is much more to tell of this great task of "waging neutrality," and it will be told in its proper place. But already it is apparent to what extent these two men served the cause of English-speaking civilization. Neither would quibble or uphold an argument which he thought unjust, even though his nation might gain in a material sense, and neither would pitch the discussion in any other key than forbearance and mutual accommodation and courtliness. For both men had the same end in view. They were both thinking, not of the present, but of the coming centuries. The coöperation of the two nations in meeting the dangers of autocracy and Prussian barbarism, in laying the foundations of a future in which peace, democracy, and international justice should be the directing ideas of human society—such was the ultimate purpose at which these two statesmen aimed. And no men have ever been more splendidly justified by events. The Anglo-American situation of 1914 contained dangers before which all believers in real progress now shudder. Had Anglo-American diplomacy been managed with less skill and consideration, the United States and Great Britain would have become involved in a quarrel beside which all their previous differences would have appeared insignificant. Mutual hatreds and hostilities would have risen that would have prevented the entrance of the United States into the war on the side of the Allies. It is not inconceivable that the history of 1812

would have been repeated, and that the men and resources of this country might have been used to support purposes which have always been hateful to the American conscience. That the world was saved from this calamity is owing largely to the fact that Great Britain had in its Foreign Office a man who was always solving temporary irritations with his eyes constantly fixed upon a great goal, and that the United States had as ambassador in London a man who had the most exalted view of the mission of his country, who had dedicated his life to the world-wide spread of the American ideal, and who believed that an indispensable part of this work was the maintenance of a sympathetic and helpful coöperation with the English-speaking peoples.

CHAPTER XIII

GERMANY'S FIRST PEACE DRIVES

THE Declaration of London was not the only problem that distracted Page in these early months of the war. Washington's apparent determination to make peace also added to his daily anxieties. That any attempt to end hostilities should have distressed so peace-loving and humanitarian a statesman as Page may seem surprising; it was, however, for the very reason that he was a man of peace that these Washington endeavours caused him endless worry. In Page's opinion they indicated that President Wilson did not have an accurate understanding of the war. The inspiring force back of them, as the Ambassador well understood, was a panic-stricken Germany. The real purpose was not a peace, but a truce; and the cause which was to be advanced was not democracy but Prussian absolutism. Between the Battle of the Marne and the sinking of the *Lusitania* four attempts were made to end the war; all four were set afoot by Germany. President Wilson was the man to whom the Germans appealed to rescue them from their dilemma. It is no longer a secret that the Germans at this time regarded their situation as a tragic one; the success that they had anticipated for forty years had proved to be a disaster. The attempt to repeat the great episodes of 1864, 1866, and 1870, when Prussia had overwhelmed Denmark, Austria, and France in three brief campaigns, had ignominiously failed. Instead of beholding a conquered Europe at her feet, Germany awoke from her illusion to find

herself encompassed by a ring of resolute and powerful foes. The fact that the British Empire, with its immense resources, naval, military, and economic, was now leading the alliance against them, convinced the most intelligent Germans that the Fatherland was face to face with the greatest crisis in its history.

Peace now became the underground Germanic programme. Yet the Germans did not have that inexorable respect for facts which would have persuaded them to accept terms to which the Allies could consent. The military oligarchy were thinking not so much of saving the Fatherland as of saving themselves; a settlement which would have been satisfactory to their enemies would have demanded concessions which the German people, trained for forty years to expect an unparalleled victory, would have regarded as a defeat. The collapse of the militarists and of Hohenzollernism would have ensued. What the German oligarchy desired was a peace which they could picture to their deluded people as a triumph, one that would enable them to extricate themselves at the smallest possible cost from what seemed a desperate position, to escape the penalties of their crimes, to emerge from their failure with a Germany still powerful, both in economic resources and in arms, and to set to work again industriously preparing for a renewal of the struggle at a more favourable time. If negotiations resulted in such a truce, the German purpose would be splendidly served; even if they failed, however, the gain for Germany would still be great. Germany could appear as the belligerent which desired peace and the Entente could perhaps be manœuvred into the position of the side responsible for continuing the war. The consideration which was chiefly at stake in these tortuous proceedings was public opinion in the United States. Americans do

not yet understand the extent to which their country was regarded as the determining power. Both the German and the British Foreign Offices clearly understood, in August, 1914, that the United States, by throwing its support, especially its economic support, to one side or the other, could settle the result. Probably Germany grasped this point even more clearly than did Great Britain, for, from the beginning, she constantly nourished the hope that she could embroil the United States and Great Britain—a calamity which would have given victory to the German arms. In every German move there were thus several motives, and one of the chief purposes of the subterranean campaigns which she now started for peace was the desire of putting Britain in the false light of prolonging the war for aggressive purposes, and thus turning to herself that public opinion in this country which was so outspoken on the side of the Allies. Such public opinion, if it could be brought to regard Germany in a tolerant spirit, could easily be fanned into a flame by the disputes over blockades and shipping, and the power of the United States might thus be used for the advancement of the Fatherland. On the other hand, if Germany could obtain a peace which would show a profit for her tremendous effort, then the negotiations would have accomplished their purpose.

Conditions at Washington favoured operations of this kind. Secretary Bryan was an ultra-pacifist; like men of one idea, he saw only the fact of a hideous war, and he was prepared to welcome anything that would end hostilities. The cessation of bloodshed was to him the great purpose to be attained: in the mind of Secretary Bryan it was more important that the war should be stopped than that the Allies should win. To President Wilson the European disaster appeared to be merely a selfish struggle for

power, in which both sides were almost equally to blame. He never accepted Page's obvious interpretation that the single cause was Germany's determination to embark upon a war of world conquest. From the beginning, therefore, Page saw that he would have great difficulty in preventing intervention from Washington in the interest of Germany, yet this was another great service to which he now unhesitatingly directed his efforts.

The Ambassador was especially apprehensive of these peace moves in the early days of September, when the victorious German armies were marching on Paris. In London, as in most parts of the world, the capture of the French capital was then regarded as inevitable. September 3, 1914, was one of the darkest days in modern times. The population of Paris was fleeing southward; the Government had moved its headquarters to Bordeaux; and the moment seemed to be at hand when the German Emperor would make his long anticipated entry into the capital of France. It was under these circumstances that the American Ambassador to Great Britain sent the following message directly to the President:

To the President

American Embassy, London,

Sep. 3, 4 A. M.

Everybody in this city confidently believes that the Germans, if they capture Paris, will make a proposal for peace, and that the German Emperor will send you a message declaring that he is unwilling to shed another drop of blood. Any proposal that the Kaiser makes will be simply the proposal of a conqueror. His real purpose will be to preserve the Hohenzollern dynasty and the imperial bureaucracy. The prevailing English judgment is that, if Germany be permitted to stop hostilities, the

war will have accomplished nothing. There is a determination here to destroy utterly the German bureaucracy, and Englishmen are prepared to sacrifice themselves to any extent in men and money. The preparations that are being made here are for a long war; as I read the disposition and the character of Englishmen they will not stop until they have accomplished their purpose. There is a general expression of hope in this country that neither the American Government nor the public opinion of our country will look upon any suggestion for peace as a serious one which does not aim, first of all, at the absolute destruction of the German bureaucracy.

From such facts as I can obtain, it seems clear to me that the opinion of Europe—excluding of course, Germany—is rapidly solidifying into a severe condemnation of the German Empire. The profoundest moral judgment of the world is taking the strongest stand against Germany and German methods. Such incidents as the burning of Louvain and other places, the slaughter of civilian populations, the outrages against women and children—outrages of such a nature that they cannot be printed, but which form a matter of common conversation everywhere—have had the result of arousing Great Britain to a mood of the grimmest determination.

PAGE.

This message had hardly reached Washington when the peace effort of which it warned the President began to take practical form. In properly estimating these manœuvres it must be borne in mind that German diplomacy always worked underground and that it approached its negotiations in a way that would make the other side appear as taking the initiative. This was a phase of German diplomatic technique with which every Euro-

pean Foreign Office had long been familiar. Count Bernstorff arrived in the United States from Germany in the latter part of August, evidently with instructions from his government to secure the intercession of the United States. There were two unofficial men in New York who were ideally qualified to serve the part of intermediaries. Mr. James Speyer had been born in New York; he had received his education at Frankfort-on-the-Main, Germany, and had spent his apprenticeship also in the family banking house in that city. As the head of an American banking house with important German affiliations, his interests and sympathies were strong on the side of the Fatherland; indeed, he made no attempt to conceal his strong pro-Germanism.

Mr. Oscar S. Straus had been born in Germany; his father had been a German revolutionist of 'Forty-eight; like Carl Schurz, Abraham Jacobi, and Franz Sigel, he had come to America to escape Prussian militarism and the Prussian autocracy, and his children had been educated in a detestation of the things for which the German Empire stood. Mr. Oscar Straus was only two years old when he was brought to this country, and he had given the best evidences of his Americanism in a distinguished public career. Three times he had served the United States as Ambassador to Turkey; he had filled the post of Secretary of Commerce and Labour in President Roosevelt's cabinet, and had held other important public commissions. Among his other activities, Mr. Straus had played an important part in the peace movement of the preceding quarter of a century and he had been a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Mr. Straus was on excellent terms with the German, the British, and the French ambassadors at Washington. As far back as 1888, when he was American

Minister at Constantinople, Bernstorff, then a youth, was an attaché at the German Embassy; the young German was frequently at the American Legation and used to remind Mr. Straus, whenever he met him in later years, how pleasantly he remembered his hospitality. With Sir Cecil Spring Rice, the British Ambassador, and M. Jules Jusserand, the French Ambassador, Mr. Straus had also become friendly in Constantinople and in Washington. This background, and Mr. Straus's well-known pro-British sentiments, would have made him a desirable man to act as a liaison agent between the Germans and the Allies, but there were other reasons why this ex-ambassador would be useful at this time. Mr. Straus had been in Europe at the outbreak of the war; he had come into contact with the British statesmen in those exciting early August days; in particular he had discussed all phases of the conflict with Sir Edward Grey, and before leaving England, he had given certain interviews which the British statesmen declared had greatly helped their cause in the United States. Of course, the German Government knew all about these activities.

On September 4th, Mr. Straus arrived at New York on the *Mauretania*. He had hardly reached this country when he was called upon the telephone by Mr. Speyer, a friend of many years' standing. Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador, Mr. Speyer said, was a guest at his country home, Waldheim, at Scarborough, on the Hudson; Mr. Speyer was giving a small, informal dinner the next evening, Saturday, September 5th, and he asked Mr. and Mrs. Straus to come. The other important guests were Mr. Frank A. Vanderlip, president of the National City Bank, and Mrs. Vanderlip. Mr. Straus accepted the invitation, mentally resolving that he would not discuss the war himself, but merely listen. It would

certainly have been a difficult task for any man to avoid this subject on this particular evening; the date was September 5th, the day when the German Army suddenly stopped in its progress toward Paris, and began retreating, the French and the British forces in pursuit. A few minutes before Count Bernstorff sat down at Mr. Speyer's table, with Mr. Straus opposite, he had learned that the magnificent enterprise which Germany had planned for forty years had failed, and that his country was facing a monstrous disaster. The Battle of the Marne was raging in all its fury while this pacific conversation at Mr. Speyer's house was taking place.

Of course the war became the immediate topic of discussion. Count Bernstorff at once plunged into the usual German point of view—that Germany did not want war in the first place, that the Entente had forced the issue, and the like.

"The Emperor and the German Government stood for peace," he said.

Naturally, a man who had spent a considerable part of his life promoting the peace cause pricked up his ears at this statement.

"Does that sentiment still prevail in Germany?" asked Mr. Straus.

"Yes," replied the German Ambassador.

"Would your government entertain a proposal for mediation now?" asked Mr. Straus.

"Certainly," Bernstorff promptly replied. He hastened to add, however, that he was speaking unofficially. He had had no telegraphic communication from Berlin for five days, and therefore could not definitely give the attitude of his government. But he was quite sure that the Kaiser would be glad to have President Wilson take steps to end the war.

The possibility that he might play a part in bringing hostilities to a close now occurred to Mr. Straus. He had come to the dinner determined to avoid the subject altogether, but Count Bernstorff had precipitated the issue in a way that left the American no option. Certainly Mr. Straus would have been derelict if he had not reported this conversation to the high quarters for which Count Bernstorff had evidently intended it.

"That is a very important statement you have made, Mr. Ambassador," said Mr. Straus, measuring every word. "May I make use of it?"

"Yes."

"May I use it in any way I choose?"

"You may," replied Bernstorff.

Mr. Straus saw in this acquiescent mood a chance to appeal directly to President Wilson.

"Do you object to my laying this matter before our government?"

"No, I do not."

Mr. Straus glanced at his watch; it was 10:15 o'clock.

"I think I shall go to Washington at once—this very night. I can get the midnight train."

Mr. Speyer, who has always maintained that this proceeding was casual and in no way promoted by himself and Bernstorff, put in a word of caution.

"I would sleep on it," he suggested.

But, in a few moments, Mr. Straus was speeding in his automobile through Westchester County in the direction of the Pennsylvania Station. He caught the express, and, the next morning, which was Sunday the sixth, he was laying the whole matter before Secretary Bryan at the latter's house. Naturally, Mr. Bryan was overjoyed at the news; he at once summoned Bernstorff from New York to Washington, and went over the suggestion per-

sonally. The German Ambassador repeated the statements which he had made to Mr. Straus—always guardedly qualifying his remarks by saying that the proposal had not come originally from him but from his American friend. Meanwhile Mr. Bryan asked Mr. Straus to discuss the matter with the British and French ambassadors.

The meeting took place at the British Embassy. The two representatives of the Entente, though only too glad to talk the matter over, were more skeptical about the attitude of Bernstorff than Mr. Bryan had been.

"Of course, Mr. Straus," said Sir Cecil Spring Rice, "you know that this dinner was arranged purposely so that the German Ambassador could meet you?"

Mr. Straus demurred at this statement, but the Englishman smiled.

"Do you suppose," Sir Cecil asked, "that any ambassador would make such a statement as Bernstorff made to you without instructions from his government?"

"You and M. Jusserand," replied the American, "have devoted your whole lives to diplomacy with distinguished ability and you can therefore answer that question better than I."

"I can assure you," replied M. Jusserand, "that no ambassador under the German system would dare for a moment to make such a statement without being authorized to do so."

"The Germans," added Sir Cecil, "have a way of making such statements unofficially and then denying that they have ever made them."

Both the British and French ambassadors, however, thought that the proposal should be seriously considered.

"If it holds out one chance in a hundred of lessening

the length of the war, we should entertain it," said Ambassador Jusserand.

"I certainly hope that you will entertain it cordially," said Mr. Straus.

"Not cordially—that is a little too strong."

"Well, sympathetically?"

"Yes, sympathetically," said M. Jusserand, with a smile.

These facts were at once cabled to Page, who took the matter up with Sir Edward Grey. A despatch from the latter to the British Ambassador in Washington gives a splendid summary of the British attitude on such approaches at this time.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir Cecil Spring Rice

Foreign Office,
September 9, 1914.

SIR:

The American Ambassador showed me to-day a communication that he had from Mr. Bryan. It was to the effect that Mr. Straus and Mr. Speyer had been talking with the German Ambassador, who had said that, though he was without instructions, he thought that Germany might be disposed to end the war by mediation. This had been repeated to Mr. Bryan, who had spoken to the German Ambassador, and had heard the same from him. Mr. Bryan had taken the matter up, and was asking direct whether the German Emperor would accept mediation if the other parties who were at war would do the same.

The American Ambassador said to me that this information gave him a little concern. He feared that, coming after the declaration that we had signed last week with France and Russia about carrying on the war in

common,¹ the peace parties in the United States might be given the impression that Germany was in favour of peace, and that the responsibility for continuing the war was on others.

I said that the agreement that we had made with France and Russia was an obvious one; when three countries were at war on the same side, one of them could not honourably make special terms for itself and leave the others in the lurch. As to mediation, I was favourable to it in principle, but the real question was: On what terms could the war be ended? If the United States could devise anything that would bring this war to an end and prevent another such war being forced on Europe I should welcome the proposal.

The Ambassador said that before the war began I had made suggestions for avoiding it, and that these suggestions had been refused.

I said that this was so, but since the war began there were two further considerations to be borne in mind: We were fighting to save the west of Europe from being dominated by Prussian militarism; Germany had prepared to the day for this war, and we could not again have a great military power in the middle of Europe preparing war in this way and forcing it upon us; and the second thing was that cruel wrong had been done to Belgium, for which there should be some compensation. I had no indication whatever that Germany was prepared to make any reparation to Belgium, and, while repeating that in principle I was favourable to mediation, I could see nothing to do but to wait for the reply of the German Emperor to the question that Mr. Bryan had put to him

¹On September 5, 1914, Great Britain, France, and Russia signed the Pact of London, an agreement which bound the three powers of the Entente to make war and peace as a unit. Each power specifically pledged itself not to make a separate peace.

and for the United States to ascertain on what terms Germany would make peace if the Emperor's reply was favourable to mediation.

The Ambassador made it quite clear that he regarded what the German Ambassador had said as a move in the game. He agreed with what I had said respecting terms of peace, and that there seemed no prospect at present of Germany being prepared to accept them.

I am, &c.,

E. GREY.

A letter from Page to Colonel House gives Page's interpretation of this negotiation:

To Edward M. House

London, September 10, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

A rather serious situation has arisen: The Germans of course thought that they would take Paris. They were then going to propose a conqueror's terms of peace, which they knew would not be accepted. But they would use their so-called offer of peace purely for publicity purposes. They would say, "See, men of the world, we want peace; we offer peace; the continuance of this awful war is not our doing." They are using Hearst for this purpose. I fear they are trying to use so good a man as Oscar Straus. They are fooling the Secretary.

Every nation was willing to accept Sir Edward Grey's proposals but Germany. She was bent on a war of conquest. Now she's likely to get licked—lock, stock and barrel. She is carrying on a propaganda and a publicity campaign all over the world. The Allies can't and won't accept any peace except on the condition that German militarism be uprooted. They are not going to live

again under that awful shadow and fear. They say truly that life on such terms is not worth living. Moreover, if Germany should win the military control of Europe, she would soon—that same war-party—attack the United States. The war will not end until this condition can be imposed—that there shall be no more militarism.

But in the meantime, such men as Straus (a good fellow) may be able to let (by helping) the Germans appear to the Peace people as really desiring peace. Of course, what they want is to save their mutton.

And if we begin mediation talk now on that basis, we shall not be wanted when a real chance for mediation comes. If we are so silly as to play into the hands of the German-Hearst publicity bureau, our chance for real usefulness will be thrown away.

Put the President on his guard.

W. H. P.

In the latter part of the month came Germany's reply. One would never suspect, when reading it, that Germany had played any part in instigating the negotiation. The Kaiser repeated the old charges that the Entente had forced the war on the Fatherland, that it was now determined to annihilate the Central Powers and that consequently there was no hope that the warring countries could agree upon acceptable terms for ending the struggle.

So ended Germany's first peace drive, and in the only possible way that it could end. But the Washington administration continued to be most friendly to mediation. A letter of Colonel House's, dated October 4, 1914, possesses great historical importance. It was written after a detailed discussion with President Wilson, and it indicates not only the President's desire to bring the struggle

to a close, but it describes in some detail the principles which the President then regarded as essential to a permanent peace. It furnishes the central idea of the presidential policy for the next four years; indeed, it contains the first statement of that famous "Article X" of the Covenant of the League of Nations which was Mr. Wilson's most important contribution to that contentious document. This was the article which pledges the League "to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence" of all its members; it was the article which, more than any other, made the League obnoxious to Americans, who interpreted it as an attempt to involve them perpetually in the quarrels of Europe; and it was the one section of the Treaty of Versailles which was most responsible for the rejection of that document by the United States Senate. There are other suggestions in Colonel House's letter which apparently bore fruit in the League Covenant. It is somewhat astonishing that a letter of Colonel House's, written as far back as October 3, 1914, two months after the outbreak of the war, should contain "Article X" as one of the essential terms of peace, as well as other ideas afterward incorporated in that document, accompanied by an injunction that Page should present the suggestion to Sir Edward Grey:

From Edward M. House

115 East 53rd Street,
New York City.
October 3rd, 1914.

DEAR PAGE:

Frank [the Ambassador's son] has just come in and has given me your letter of September 22nd¹ which is of ab-

¹Published in Chapter XI, page 327.

sorbing interest. You have never done anything better than this letter, and some day, when you give the word, it must be published. But in the meantime, it will repose in the safe deposit box along with your others and with those of our great President.

I have just returned from Washington where I was with the President for nearly four days. He is looking well and is well. Sometimes his spirits droop, but then again, he is his normal self.

Before I came from Prides¹ I was fearful lest Straus, Bernstorff, and others would drive the President into doing something unwise. I have always counselled him to remain quiet for the moment and let matters unfold themselves further. In the meantime, I have been conferring with Bernstorff, with Dumba,² and, of course, Spring Rice. The President now wants me to keep in touch with the situation, and I do not think there is any danger of any one on the outside injecting himself into it unless Mr. Bryan does something on his own initiative.

Both Bernstorff and Dumba say that their countries are ready for peace talks, but the difficulty is with England. Sir Cecil says their statements are made merely to place England in a false position.

The attitude, I think, for England to maintain is the one which she so ably put forth to the world. That is, peace must come only upon condition of disarmament and must be permanent. I have a feeling that Germany will soon be willing to discuss terms. I do not agree that Germany has to be completely crushed and that terms must be made either in Berlin or London. It is manifestly against England's interest and the interest of

¹Colonel House's summer home in Massachusetts.

²Ambassador from Austria-Hungary to the United States.

Europe generally for Russia to become the dominating military force in Europe, just as Germany was. The dislike which England has for Germany should not blind her to actual conditions. If Germany is crushed, England cannot solely write the terms of peace, but Russia's wishes must also largely prevail.

With Russia strong in militarism, there is no way by which she could be reached. Her government is so constituted that friendly conversations could not be had with her as they might be had even with such a power as Germany, and the world would look forward to another cat-
 aclysm and in the not too distant future.

When peace conversations begin, at best, they will probably continue many months before anything tangible comes from them. England and the Allies could readily stand on the general proposition that only enduring peace will satisfy them and I can see no insuperable obstacle in the way.

The Kaiser did not want war and was not responsible for it further than his lack of foresight which led him to build up a formidable engine of war which later dominated him. Peace cannot be made until the war party in Germany find that their ambitions cannot be realized, and this, I think, they are beginning to know.

When the war is ended and the necessary territorial alignments made, it seems to me, the best guaranty of peace could be brought by every nation in Europe guaranteeing the territorial integrity of every other nation.¹ By confining the manufacture of arms to the governments themselves and by permitting representatives of all nations to inspect, at any time, the works.²

¹This, with certain modifications is Article 10 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

²There is a suggestion of these provisions in Article 8 of the League Covenant.

Then, too, all sources of national irritation should be removed so what at first may be a sore spot cannot grow into a malignant disease.¹ It will not be too difficult, I think, to bring about an agreement that will insure permanent peace, provided all the nations of Europe are honest in their desire for it.

I am writing this to you with the President's knowledge and consent and with the thought that it will be conveyed to Sir Edward. There is a growing impatience in this country because of this war and there is constant pressure upon the President to use his influence to bring about normal conditions. He does not wish to do anything to irritate or offend any one of the belligerent nations, but he has an abiding faith in the efficacy of open and frank discussion between those that are now at war.

As far as I can see, no harm can be done by a dispassionate discussion at this stage, even though nothing comes of it. In a way, it is perhaps better that informal and unofficial conversations are begun and later the principals can take it up themselves.

I am sure that Sir Edward is too great a man to let any prejudices deter him from ending, as soon as possible, the infinite suffering that each day of war entails.

Faithfully yours,
E. M. HOUSE.

It is apparent that the failure of this first attempt at mediation discouraged neither Bernstorff nor the Washington administration. Colonel House was constantly meeting the German and the British Ambassadors; he was also, as his correspondence shows, in touch with Zimmermann, the German Under Foreign Secretary. The German desire for peace grew stronger in the autumn

¹Article 11 of the League Covenant reflects the influence of this idea.

and winter of 1914-1915, as the fact became more and more clear that Great Britain was summoning all her resources for the greatest effort in her history, as the stalemate on the Aisne more and more impressed upon the German chieftains the impossibility of obtaining any decision against the French Army, and as the Russians showed signs of great recuperation after the disaster of Tannenberg. By December 4th Washington had evidently made up its mind to move again.

From Edward M. House

115 East 53rd Street,
New York City.

December 4th, 1914.

DEAR PAGE:

The President desires to start peace parleys at the very earliest moment, but he does not wish to offend the sensibilities of either side by making a proposal before the time is opportune. He is counting upon being given a hint, possibly through me, in an unofficial way, as to when a proffer from him will be acceptable.

Pressure is being brought upon him to offer his services again, for this country is suffering, like the rest of the neutral world, from the effects of the war, and our people are becoming restless.

Would you mind conveying this thought delicately to Sir Edward Grey and letting me know what he thinks?

Would the Allies consider parleys upon a basis of indemnity for Belgium and a cessation of militarism? If so, then something may be begun with the Dual Alliance.

I have been told that negotiations between Russia and Japan were carried on several months before they agreed to meet at Portsmouth. The havoc that is being wrought in human lives and treasure is too great to permit racial

feeling or revenge to enter into the thoughts of those who govern the nations at war.

I stand ready to go to Germany at any moment in order to sound the temper of that government, and I would then go to England as I did last June.

This nation would not look with favour upon a policy that held nothing but the complete annihilation of the enemy.

Something must be done sometime, by somebody, to initiate a peace movement, and I can think of no way, at the moment, than the one suggested.

I will greatly appreciate your writing me fully and freely in regard to this phase of the situation.

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

To this Page immediately replied:

To Edward M. House

December 12th, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

The English rulers have no feeling of vengeance. I have never seen the slightest traces of that. But they are determined to secure future safety. They will not have this experience repeated if they can help it. They realize now that they have been living under a sort of fear—or dread—for ten years: they sometimes felt that it was bound to come some time and then at other times they could hardly believe it. And they will spend all the men and all the money they have rather than suffer that fear again or have that danger. Now, if anybody could fix a basis for the complete restoration of Belgium, so far as restoration is possible, and for the elimination of militarism, I am sure the *English* would talk on that basis.

But there are two difficulties—Russia wouldn't talk till she has Constantinople, and I haven't found anybody who can say exactly what you mean by the "elimination of militarism." Disarmament? England will have her navy to protect her incoming bread and meat. How, then, can she say to Germany, "You can't have an army"?

You say the Americans are becoming "restless." The plain fact is that the English people, and especially the English military and naval people, don't care a fig what the Americans think and feel. They say, "We're fighting their battle, too—the battle of democracy and freedom from bureaucracy—why don't they come and help us in our life-and-death struggle?" I have a drawer full of letters saying this, not one of which I have ever answered. The official people never say that of course—nor the really responsible people, but a vast multitude of the public do. This feeling comes out even in the present military and naval rulers of this Kingdom—comes indirectly to me. A part of the public, then, and the military part of the Cabinet, don't longer care for American opinion and they resent even such a reference to peace as the President made in his Message to Congress.¹ But the civil part of the Cabinet and the responsible and better part of the public do care very much. The President's intimation about peace, however, got no real response here. They think he doesn't understand the meaning of the war. They don't want war; they are not a warlike people. They don't hate the Germans. There is no feeling of vengeance. They constantly say: "Why

¹From the President's second message to Congress, December 8, 1914: "It is our dearest present hope that this character and reputation may presently, in God's providence, bring us an opportunity, such as has seldom been vouchsafed any nation, to counsel and obtain peace in the world and reconciliation and a healing settlement of many a matter that has cooled and interrupted the friendship of nations."

“do the Germans hate us? We don’t hate them.” But, since Germany set out to rule the world and to conquer Great Britain, they say, “We’ll all die first.” That’s “all there is to it.” And they will all die unless they can so fix things that this war cannot be repeated. Lady K—, as kindly an old lady as ever lived, said to me the other day: “A great honour has come to us. Our son has been killed in battle, fighting for the safety of England.”

Now, the question which nobody seems to be able to answer is this: How can the military party and the military spirit of Germany be prevented from continuing to prepare for the conquest of Great Britain and from going to work to try it again? That implies a change in the form, spirit, and control of the German Empire. If they keep up a great army, they will keep it up with that end more or less in view. If the military party keeps in power, they will try it again in twenty-five or forty years. This is all that the English care about or think about.

They don’t see how it is to be done themselves. All they see yet is that they must show the Germans that they can’t whip Great Britain. If England wins decisively the English hope that somehow the military party will be overthrown in Germany and that the Germans, under peaceful leadership, will go about their business—industrial, political, educational, etc.—and quit dreaming of and planning for universal empire and quit maintaining a great war-machine, which at some time, for some reason, must attack somebody to justify its existence. This makes it difficult for the English to make overtures to or to receive overtures from this military war-party which now *is* Germany. But, if it be possible so completely to whip the war party that it will somehow be thrown out of power at home—that’s the only way they now see out of it. To patch up a peace, leaving the

German war party in power, they think, would be only to invite another war.

If you can get over this point, you can bring the English around in ten minutes. But they are not going to take any chances on it. Read English history and English literature about the Spanish Armada or about Napoleon. They are acting those same scenes over again, having the same emotions, the same purpose: nobody must invade or threaten England. "If they do, we'll spend the last man and the last shilling. We value," they say truly, "the good-will and the friendship of the United States more than we value anything except our own freedom, but we'll risk even that rather than admit copper to Germany, because every pound of copper prolongs the war."

There you are. I've blinked myself blind and talked myself hoarse to men in authority—from Grey down—to see a way out—without keeping this intolerable slaughter up to the end. But they stand just where I tell you.

And the horror of it no man knows. The news is suppressed. Even those who see it and know it do not realize it. Four of the crack regiments of this kingdom—regiments that contained the flower of the land and to which it was a distinction to belong—have been practically annihilated, one or two of them annihilated twice. Yet their ranks are filled up and you never hear a murmur. Presently it'll be true that hardly a title or an estate in England will go to its natural heir—the heir has been killed. Yet, not a murmur; for England is threatened with invasion. They'll all die first. It will presently be true that more men will have been killed in this war than were killed before in all the organized wars since the Christian era began. The English are willing and eager to stop it if things can be so fixed that there will be

no military power in Europe that wishes or prepares to attack and invade England.

I've had many one-hour, two-hour, three-hour talks with Sir Edward Grey. He sees nothing further than I have written. He says to me often that if the United States could see its way to cease to protest against stopping war materials from getting into Germany, they could end the war more quickly—all this, of course, informally; and I say to him that the United States will consider any proposal you will make that does not infringe on a strict neutrality. Violate a rigid neutrality we will not do. And, of course, he does not ask that. I give him more trouble than all the other neutral Powers combined; they all say this. And, on the other side, his war-lord associates in the Cabinet make his way hard.

So it goes—God bless us, it's awful. I never get away from it—war, war, war every waking minute, and the worry of it; and I see no near end of it. I've had only one thoroughly satisfactory experience in a coon's age, and this was this: Two American ships were stopped the other day at Falmouth. I telegraphed the captains to come here to see me. I got the facts from them—all the facts. I telephoned Sir Edward that I wished to see him at once. I had him call in one of his ship-detaining committee. I put the facts on the table. I said, "By what right, or theory of right, or on what excuse, are those ships stopped? They are engaged in neutral commerce. They fly the American flag." One of them was released that night—no more questions asked. The other was allowed to go after giving bond to return a lot of kerosene which was loaded at the bottom of the ship.

If I could get facts, I could do many things. The State Department telegraphs me merely what the shipper says—a partial statement. The British Government tells me

(after infinite delay) another set of facts. The British Government says, "We're sorry, but the Prize Court must decide." Our Government wires a dissertation on International Law—Protest, protest: (I've done nothing else since the world began!) One hour with a sensible ship captain does more than a month of cross-wrangling with Government Departments.

I am trying my best, God knows, to keep the way as smooth as possible; but neither government helps me. Our Government merely sends the shipper's ex-parte statement. This Government uses the Navy's excuse. . . .

At present, I can't for the life of me see a way to peace, for the one reason I have told you. The Germans wish to whip England, to invade England. They started with their army toward England. Till that happened England didn't have an army. But I see no human power that can give the English now what they are determined to have—safety for the future—till some radical change is made in the German system so that they will no longer have a war-party any more than England has a war-party. England surely has no wish to make conquest of Germany. If Germany will show that she has no wish to make conquest of England, the war would end tomorrow.

What impresses me through it all is the backwardness of all the Old World in realizing the true aims of government and the true methods. I can't see why any man who has hope for the progress of mankind should care to live anywhere in Europe. To me it is all infinitely sad. This dreadful war is a logical outcome of their condition, their thought, their backwardness. I think I shall never care to see the continent again, which of course is committing suicide and bankruptcy. When my natural term of service is done here, I shall go home with more

joy than you can imagine. That's the only home for a man who wishes his horizon to continue to grow wider.

All this for you and me only—nobody else.

Heartily yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

Probably Page thought that this statement of the case—and it was certainly a masterly statement—would end any attempt to get what he regarded as an unsatisfactory and dangerous peace. But President Wilson could not be deterred from pressing the issue. His conviction was firm that this winter of 1914-1915 represented the most opportune time to bring the warring nations to terms, and it was a conviction from which he never departed. After the sinking of the *Lusitania* the Administration gazed back regretfully at its frustrated attempts of the preceding winter, and it was inclined to place the responsibility for this failure upon Great Britain and France. "The President's judgment," wrote Colonel House on August 4, 1915, three months after the *Lusitania* went down, "was that last autumn was the time to discuss peace parleys, and we both saw present possibilities. War is a great gamble at best, and there was too much at stake in this one to take chances. I believe if one could have started peace parleys in November, we could have forced the evacuation of both France and Belgium, and finally forced a peace which would have eliminated militarism on land and sea. The wishes of the Allies were heeded with the result that the war has now fastened itself upon the vitals of Europe and what the end may be is beyond the knowledge of man."

This shows that the efforts which the Administration was making were not casual or faint-hearted, but that they represented a most serious determination to bring

hostilities to an end. This letter and the correspondence which now took place with Page also indicate the general terms upon which the Wilson Administration believed that the mighty differences could be composed. The ideas which Colonel House now set forth were probably more the President's than his own; he was merely the intermediary in their transmission. They emphasized Mr. Wilson's conviction that a decisive victory on either side would be a misfortune for mankind. As early as August, 1914, this was clearly the conviction that underlay all others in the President's interpretation of events. His other basic idea was that militarism should come to an end "on land and sea"; this could mean nothing except that Germany was expected to abandon its army and that Great Britain was to abandon its navy.

From Edward M. House

115 East 53rd Street,
New York City.
January 4th, 1915.

DEAR PAGE:

I believe the Dual Alliance is thoroughly ready for peace and I believe they would be willing to agree upon terms England would accept provided Russia and France could be satisfied.

They would, in my opinion, evacuate both Belgium and France and indemnify the former, and they would, I think, be willing to begin negotiations upon a basis looking to permanent peace.

It would surprise me if the Germans did not come out in the open soon and declare that they have always been for peace, that they are for peace now, and that they are willing to enter into a compact which would insure peace for all time; that they have been misrepresented and

maligned and that they leave the entire responsibility for the continuation of the war with the Allies.

If they should do this, it would create a profound impression, and if it was not met with sympathy by the Allies, the neutral sentiment, which is now almost wholly against the Germans, would veer toward them.

Will you not convey this thought to Sir Edward and let me know what he says?

The President is willing and anxious for me to go to England and Germany as soon as there is anything tangible to go on, and whenever my presence will be welcome. The Germans have already indicated this feeling but I have not been able to get from Spring Rice any expression from his Government.

As I told you before, the President does not wish to offend the sensibilities of any one by premature action, but he is, of course, enormously interested in initiating at least tentative conversations.

Will you not advise me in regard to this?

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

From Edward M. House

115 East 53rd Street,

New York City.

January 18, 1915.

DEAR PAGE:

The President has sent me a copy of your confidential dispatch No. 1474, January 15th.

The reason you had no information in regard to what General French mentioned was because no one knew of it outside of the President and myself and there was no safe way to inform you.

As a matter of fact, there has been no direct proposal

made by anybody. I have had repeated informal talks with the different ambassadors and I have had direct communication with Zimmermann, which has led the President and me to believe that peace conversations may be now initiated in an unofficial way.

This is the purpose of my going over on the *Lusitania*, January 30th. When I reach London I will be guided by circumstances as to whether I shall go next to France or Germany.

The President and I find that we are going around in a circle in dealing with the representatives in Washington, and he thinks it advisable and necessary to reach the principals direct. When I explain just what is in the President's mind, I believe they will all feel that it was wise for me to come at this time.

I shall not write more fully for the reason I am to see you so soon.

I am sending this through the kindness of Sir Horace Plunkett.

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

P. S. We shall probably say, for public consumption, that I am coming to look into relief measures, and see what further can be done. Of course, no one but you and Sir Edward must know the real purpose of my visit.

Why was Colonel House so confident that the Dual Alliance was prepared at this time to discuss terms of peace? Colonel House, as his letter shows, was in communication with Zimmermann, the German Under Foreign Secretary. But a more important approach had just been made, though information bearing on this had not been sent to Page. The Kaiser had asked President Wilson to transmit to Great Britain a suggestion for making peace on the basis of surrendering Belgium and of

paying for its restoration. It seems incredible that the Ambassador should not have been told of this, but Page learned of the proposal from Field Marshal French, then commanding the British armies in the field, and this accounts for Colonel House's explanation that, "the reason you had no information, in regard to what General French mentioned was because no one knew of it outside of the President and myself and there was no safe way to inform you." Page has left a memorandum which explains the whole strange proceeding—a paper which is interesting not only for its contents, but as an illustration of the unofficial way in which diplomacy was conducted in Washington at this time:

Field Marshal Sir John French, secretly at home from his command of the English forces in France, invited me to luncheon. There were his especially confidential friend Moore, the American who lives with him, and Sir John's private secretary. The military situation is this: a trench stalemate in France. Neither army has made appreciable progress in three months. Neither can advance without a great loss of men. Neither is whipped. Neither can conquer. It would require a million more men than the Allies can command and a very long time to drive the Germans back across Belgium. Presently, if the Russians succeed in driving the Germans back to German soil, there will be another trench stalemate there. Thus the war wears a practically endless outlook so far as military operations are concerned. Germany has plenty of men and plenty of food for a long struggle yet; and, if she use all the copper now in domestic use in the Empire, she will probably have also plenty of ammunition for a long struggle. She is not nearly at the end of her rope either in a military or an economic sense.

What then? The Allies are still stronger—so long as they hold together as one man. But is it reasonable to assume that they can? And, even if they can, is it worth while to win a complete victory at such a cost as the lives of practically all the able-bodied men in Europe? But can the Allies hold together as one man for two or three or four years? Well, what are we going to do? And here came the news of the lunch. General French informed me that the President had sent to England, at the request of the Kaiser, a proposal looking toward peace, Germany offering to give up Belgium and to pay for its restoration.

"This," said Sir John, "is their fourth proposal."

"And," he went on, "if they will restore Belgium and give Alsace-Lorraine to France and Constantinople will go to Russia, I can't see how we can refuse it."

He scouted the popular idea of "crushing out militarism" once for all. It would be desirable, even if it were not necessary, to leave Germany as a first-class power. We couldn't disarm her people forever. We've got to leave her and the rest to do what they think they must do; and we must arm ourselves the best we can against them.

Now—did General French send for me and tell me this just for fun and just because he likes me? He was very eager to know my opinion whether this peace offer were genuine or whether it was a trick of the Germans to—publish it later and thereby to throw the blame for continuing the war on England?

It occurs to me as possible that he was directed to tell me what he told, trusting to me, in spite of his protestations of personal confidence, etc., to get it to the President. Assuming that the President sent the Kaiser's message to the King, this may be a suggested informal answer—that if the offer be extended to give France and Russia

what they want, it will be considered, etc. This may or may not be true. Alas! the fact that I know nothing about the offer has no meaning; for the State Department never informs me of anything it takes up with the British Ambassador in Washington. Well, I'll see.

These were therefore the reasons why Colonel House had decided to go to Europe and enter into peace negotiations with the warring powers. Colonel House was wise in taking all possible precautions to conceal the purpose of this visit. His letter intimates that the German Government was eager to have him cross the ocean on this particular mission; it discloses, on the other hand, that the British Government regarded the proposed negotiations with no enthusiasm. Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Asquith would have been glad to end hostilities on terms that would permanently establish peace and abolish the vices which were responsible for the war, and they were ready to welcome courteously the President's representative and discuss the situation with him in a fair-minded spirit. But they did not believe that such an enterprise could serve a useful purpose. Possibly the military authorities, as General French's remarks to Page may indicate, did not believe that either side could win a decisive victory, but this was not the belief of the British public itself. The atmosphere in England at that time was one of confidence in the success of British arms and of suspicion and distrust of the British Government. A strong expectation prevailed in the popular mind, that the three great Powers of the Entente would at an early date destroy the menace which had enshrouded Europe for forty years, and there was no intention of giving Germany a breathing spell during which she could regenerate her forces to resume the onslaught.

In the winter of 1915 Great Britain was preparing for the naval attack on the Dardanelles, and its success was regarded as inevitable. Page had an opportunity to observe the state of optimism which prevailed in high British circles. In March of 1915 he was visiting the Prime Minister at Walmer Castle; one afternoon Mr. Asquith took him aside, informed him of the Dardanelles preparations and declared that the Allies would have possession of Constantinople in two weeks. The Prime Minister's attitude was not one of hope; it was one of confidence. The capture of Constantinople, of course, would have brought an early success to the allied army on all fronts.¹ This was the mood that was spurring on the British public to its utmost exertions, and, with such a determination prevailing everywhere, a step in the direction of peace was the last thing that the British desired; such a step could have been interpreted only as an attempt to deprive the Allies of their victory and as an effort to assist Germany in escaping the consequences of her crimes. Combined with this stout popular resolve, however, there was a lack of confidence in the Asquith ministry. An impression was broadcast that it was pacifist, even "defeatist," in its thinking, and that it harboured a weak humanitarianism which was disposed to look gently even upon the behaviour of the Prussians. The masses suspected that the ministry would welcome a peace with Germany which would mean little more than a cessation of hostilities and which would leave the great problems of the war unsolved. That this opinion was unjust, that, on the contrary, the British Foreign Office was steadily resisting all attempts to end the

¹The opening of the Dardanelles would have given Russian agricultural products access to the markets of the world and thus have preserved the Russian economic structure. It would also have enabled the Entente to munition the Russian Army. With a completely equipped Russian Army in the East and the Entente Army in the West, Germany could not long have survived the pressure.

war on an unsatisfactory basis, Page's correspondence, already quoted, abundantly proves, but this unreasoning belief did prevail and it was an important element in the situation. This is the reason why the British Cabinet regarded Colonel House's visit at that time with positive alarm. It feared that, should the purpose become known, the British public and press would conclude that the Government had invited a peace discussion. Had any such idea seized the popular mind in February and March, 1915, a scandal would have developed which would probably have caused the downfall of the Asquith Ministry. "Don't fool yourself about peace," Page writes to his son Arthur, about this time. "If any one should talk about peace, or doves, or ploughshares here, they'd shoot him."

Colonel House reached London early in February and was soon in close consultation with the Prime Minister and Sir Edward Grey. He made a great personal success; the British statesmen gained a high regard for his disinterestedness and his general desire to serve the cause of decency among nations; but he made little progress in his peace plans, simply because the facts were so discouraging and so impregnable. Sir Edward repeated to him what he had already said to Page many times: that Great Britain was prepared to discuss a peace that would really safeguard the future of Europe, but was not prepared to discuss one that would merely reinstate the régime that had existed before 1914. The fact that the Germans were not ready to accept such a peace made discussion useless. Disappointed at this failure, Colonel House left for Berlin. His letters to Page show that the British judgment of Germany was not unjust and that the warnings which Page had sent to Washington were based on facts:

From Edward M. House

Embassy of the United States of America,
Berlin, Germany,
March 20, 1915.

DEAR PAGE:

I arrived yesterday morning and I saw Zimmermann¹ almost immediately. He was very cordial and talked to me frankly and sensibly.

I tried to bring about a better feeling toward England, and told him how closely their interests touched at certain points. I also told him of the broad way in which Sir Edward was looking at the difficult problems that confronted Europe, and I expressed the hope that this view would be reciprocated elsewhere, so that, when the final settlement came, it could be made in a way that would be to the advantage of mankind.

The Chancellor is out of town for a few days and I shall see him when he returns. I shall also see Ballin, Von Gwinner, and many others. I had lunch yesterday with Baron von Wimpsch who is a very close friend of the Emperor.

Zimmermann said that it was impossible for them to make any peace overtures, and he gave me to understand that, for the moment, even what England would perhaps consent to now, could not be accepted by Germany, to say nothing of what France had in mind.

I shall hope to establish good relations here and then go somewhere and await further developments. I even doubt whether more can be done until some decisive military result is obtained by one or other of the belligerents.

¹German Under Foreign Secretary.

I will write further if there is any change in the situation. I shall probably be here until at least the 27th.

Faithfully yours,
E. M. HOUSE.

From Edward M. House

Embassy of the United States of America,
Berlin, Germany.
March 26, 1915.

DEAR PAGE:

While I have accomplished here much that is of value, yet I leave sadly disappointed that no direct move can be made toward peace.

The Civil Government are ready, and upon terms that would at least make an opening. There is also a large number in military and naval circles that I believe would be glad to begin parleys, but the trouble is mainly with the people. It is a very dangerous thing to permit a people to be misled and their minds inflamed either by the press, by speeches, or otherwise.

In my opinion, no government could live here at this time if peace was proposed upon terms that would have any chance of acceptance. Those in civil authority that I have met are as reasonable and fairminded as their counterparts in England or America, but, for the moment, they are impotent.

I hear on every side the old story that all Germany wants is a permanent guaranty of peace, so that she may proceed upon her industrial career undisturbed.

I have talked of the second convention,¹ and it has been cordially received, and there is a sentiment here, as well as

¹It was the Wilson Administration's plan that there should be two peace gatherings, one of the belligerents to settle the war, and the other of belligerents and neutrals, to settle questions of general importance growing out of the war. This latter is what Colonel House means by "the second convention."

elsewhere, to make settlement upon lines broad enough to prevent a recurrence of present conditions.

There is much to tell you verbally, which I prefer not to write.

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

Colonel House's next letter is most important, for it records the birth of that new idea which afterward became a ruling thought with President Wilson and the cause of almost endless difficulties in his dealings with Great Britain. The "new phase of the situation" to which he refers is "the Freedom of the Seas" and this brief note to Page, dated March 27, 1915, contains the first reference to this idea on record. Indeed, it is evident from the letter itself that Colonel House made this notation the very day the plan occurred to him.

From Edward M. House

Embassy of the United States of America,
Berlin, Germany.

March 27, 1915.

DEAR PAGE:

I have had a most satisfactory talk with the Chancellor. After conferring with Stovall,¹ Page,² and Willard,³ I shall return to Paris and then to London to discuss with Sir Edward a phase of the situation which promises results.

I did not think of it until to-day and have mentioned it to both the Chancellor and Zimmermann, who have received it cordially, and who join me in the belief that it may be the first thread to bridge the chasm.

¹Mr. Pleasant A. Stovall, American Minister to Switzerland.

²Mr. Thomas Nelson Page, American Ambassador to Italy.

³Mr. Joseph E. Willard, American Ambassador to Spain.

I am writing hastily, for the pouch is waiting to be closed.

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

The "freedom of the seas" was merely a proposal to make all merchant shipping, enemy and neutral, free from attack in time of war. It would automatically have ended all blockades and all interference with commerce. Germany would have been at liberty to send all her merchant ships to sea for undisturbed trade with all parts of the world in war time as in peace, and, in future, navies would be used simply for fighting. Offensively, their purpose would be to bombard enemy fortifications, to meet enemy ships in battle, and to convoy ships which were transporting troops for the invasion of enemy soil; defensively, their usefulness would consist in protecting the homeland from such attacks and such invasions. Perhaps an argument can be made for this new rule of warfare, but it is at once apparent that it is the most startling proposal brought forth in modern times in the direction of disarmament. It meant that Great Britain should abandon that agency of warfare with which she had destroyed Napoleon, and with which she expected to destroy Germany in the prevailing struggle—the blockade. From a defensive standpoint, Colonel House's proposed reform would have been a great advantage to Britain, for an honourable observance of the rule would have insured the British people its food supply in wartime. With Great Britain, however, the blockade has been historically an offensive measure: it is the way in which England has always made war. Just what reception this idea would have had with official London, in April, 1915, had Colonel House been able to present it as his own proposal, is not clear, but the Germans,

with characteristic stupidity, prevented the American from having a fair chance. The Berlin Foreign Office at once cabled to Count Bernstorff and Bernhard Dernburg—the latter a bovine publicity agent who was then promoting the German cause in the American press—with instructions to start a “propaganda” in behalf of the “freedom of the seas.” By the time Colonel House reached London, therefore, these four words had been adorned with the Germanic label. British statesmen regarded the suggestion as coming from Germany and not from America, and the reception was worse than cold.

And another horror now roughly interrupted President Wilson’s attempts at mediation. Page’s letters have disclosed that he possessed almost a clairvoyant faculty of foreseeing approaching events. The letters of the latter part of April and of early May contain many forebodings of tragedy. “Peace? Lord knows when!” he writes to his son Arthur on May 2nd. “The blowing up of a liner with American passengers may be the prelude. I almost expect such a thing.” And again on the same date: “If a British liner full of American passengers be blown up, what will Uncle Sam do? That’s what’s going to happen.”

“We all have the feeling here,” the Ambassador writes on May 6th, “that more and more frightful things are about to happen.”

The ink on those words was scarcely dry when a message from Queenstown was handed to the American Ambassador. A German submarine had torpedoed and sunk the *Lusitania* off the Old Head of Kinsale, and one hundred and twenty-four American men, women, and children had been drowned.

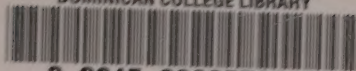
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